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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

MELODRAMA AND PATRIOTISM:  
CHARLES MAIR'S TECUMSEH

by



ALAN D. FILEWOD

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Melodrama and Patriotism: Charles Mair's Tecumseh, submitted by Alan D. Filewod in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis, entitled Melodrama and Patriotism: Charles Mair's Tecumseh examines, through a detailed analysis of an unrepresentative play the social principles of melodrama, with an emphasis on the ideological factors which determine dramatic structure and form.

Melodrama is defined in light of its social function, not as a genre contained within the scholarly limits of archetypal or historical criticism, but as an aesthetic expression of social ideology. It is argued that melodrama reduces complex social issues to a simplified dualistic conflict, the outcome of which is inherent in its formulation. Attention is paid to the problems encountered by authoritative critics in defining the genre, with the conclusion that it can only be defined in terms of the specific moral precepts of a given society. By assuming responsibility for the outcome of the moral conflict, melodrama refers, implicitly or overtly, to the shared ideologies of its audience. Its defining traits--dualistic conflict and fantastic invention--are seen as devices by which complex problems are made sensible.

It is argued that in late Victorian Canada, the search for a "national sentiment" and literature involved an attempt to fabricate a national myth as the source of a national identity. Charles Mair wrote Tecumseh in an attempt to establish the sources of a particular view of Canadian nationhood

in the popular resistance against the United States in 1812. Tecumseh celebrates an Imperialist vision of Canada as a nation founded on the principles of the British monarchy and Anglo-Saxon race-nationalism. By choosing the form of the poetic drama, Mair attempted to bring the Canadian sentiment within the broader traditions of British culture, as he understood it. The detailed analysis of Tecumseh shows how Mair's melodramatic vision compromised his desire to write a romantic tragedy, and examines, through the major contradictions of the play, the factors which account for Tecumseh's shortcomings as a drama.

In conclusion, those shortcomings are ascribed not so much to Mair's weaknesses as a poet and dramatist, but to his contradictions in purpose. Tecumseh is both an attempt to create a romantic legend, if not a national myth in itself, and an accurate historical account. Mair's inability to treat history critically is discussed as the cause of structural confusion in the play. The major characters are analyzed in terms of their function in the melodramatic scheme of the play. The reasons why Tecumseh has fallen into relative obscurity are briefly discussed, and finally, it is noted that Mair initiated a major tradition in Canadian drama.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF MELODRAMA

#### The Problem of Definition

Critics tend to agree that as a genre, melodrama extends far beyond the boundaries of taste and achievement set by the nineteenth-century popular stage. And yet, most discussions of the nature of melodrama focus on that period, as it appears to offer the most contained example of applied aesthetic principles. An obvious problem can be seen when one attempts to reconcile the Victorian drama with the contemporary attitude that most drama is melodrama, if only by default. Peter Brooks has provided a defense of this practice of defining melodrama by its nineteenth-century form:

I think the term may become so extended in its meaning that it loses much of its usefulness, at least for our purposes. When Euripedes, Shakespeare and Moliere all become melodramatists at least some of the time, and when tragedy becomes only a special subset of melodrama, we lose a sense of the cultural specificity of the genre. While recognizing that melodrama, like such other terms as romanticism and baroque, may be legitimately extended to represent constants in imaginative literature, it seems to me more interesting that melodrama can also be located historically and culturally, that there is a form, calling itself melodrama, that came into existence near the start of the nineteenth-century.... 1

Brooks' point is well taken, but not without reserve. His distinction between melodrama as a genre and as a literary tendency may in part explain the unique qualities of the nine-



teenth-century drama, but it is problematical. The problem<sup>2</sup> of the nineteenth-century melodrama is more than a matter of critical terminology. Critics have attempted, not without reason, to define melodrama as they do tragedy, that is, as a literary constant and world-view. If however, one accepts that melodrama is a materialist genre, whose principles are determined by the particular form of its society, as opposed to the more common archetypal view, one might find a way of reconciling this difficulty. Eric Bentley has suggested that melodrama is a "neurotic" genre, the "quintessence of drama"<sup>2</sup> bearing the same relation to tragedy that farce does to comedy. Our categorical tradition accepts this as valid, especially as it has proven useful in critical analysis, as Bentley has demonstrated. But might it not be possible that tragedy and melodrama cannot be honestly compared, that they perform vastly different functions in the human mind?

Because we tend to approach criticism with a categorical bias, melodrama is often seen in terms of an evolutionary growth which parallels in kind that of tragedy. Just as tragedy is defined empirically, through the creative tension of certain plays, theorists, and the Poetics of Aristotle, so is Melodrama examined in terms of tragedy: by defining exclusive areas of thematic concern and form, the critic hopes to isolate those principles which would seem to be the basis of the genre. Melodrama is usually studied as a product of the Enlightenment, beginning with the theories of the drame as expressed by Diderot and Beaumarchais, and continuing through

the plays of Kotzebue and Pixerecourt. As a recognizable historical pattern, this has been most useful, for it places the development of modern melodrama at the time of the bourgeois revolution of the late eighteenth-century. This date, vague as it is, is significant in that it gave birth not only to a new aesthetic philosophy, but exerted substantial material changes upon the world, which produced new requirements for art. Melodrama developed into its modern form in order to fulfill those requirements.

Dramatic form, like all literature, like language itself, expresses and determines human action. In this sense, form is language, an interpretive system of external stimuli. As language will evolve and adapt to integrate new concepts, so does literature respond to new opportunities. It may be that prior to the Enlightenment, melodrama as we know it was unnecessary; the material relationship between society and aesthetics was fulfilled by the existing forms.<sup>3</sup> This statement challenges the view that specific cultures have particular "visions:", that for example the classic Greeks had a "tragic" view of the universe, and expressed this view in their art. Rather, it is presumed that the very shape of the Greek society and religion resulted in a mode of creative interpretation which we call tragic today. Literature, and the possibilities of literature, are the products of the empirical conditions of a given society. Thus, while Brooks may speak of a melodramatic vision as a theoretical constant in imaginative literature, the phrase is no more meaningful than speaking

of a tragic vision in modern melodrama. As handles for the critics, they are useful devices, but they contribute little to an understanding of the form.

If aesthetics are conditioned empirically, it will be apparent that the vast changes in the material structure of society since the Enlightenment have exerted considerable influences on artistic form. In retrospect, we recognize that the debates of the neo-classicists regarding the true nature of tragedy were futile so long as Aristotle was regarded as the ultimate authority, for it is impossible to emulate accurately an historical phenomenon. On those occasions when the neo-classic experiment succeeded, it was because the new tragedy fulfilled certain aesthetic requirements in its society. Racine's Phaedre is more appropriate to his France than to Aristotle, although it seems to adhere to a strict reading of the Poetics.

The almost incredible changes in man's relation to nature over the past two centuries, in the technological transformation of the material world, have resulted in equally major transformations in language and thought. Melodrama is the form of drama most suited to adapt with these changes, because it identifies aesthetic values with the abstract moral values of the society.<sup>4</sup> Melodrama performs a social function by assuming responsibility for ethical and moral outlooks, and its capacity to make complex ideas coherent in codified form makes it an ideal vehicle to fix social values in an uncertain and ever-changing world. In that sense, the power of melo-

drama, and its resilience in the modern world, may be ascribed to the fact that it is not a constant, in the way tragedy and comedy appear to be. Northrop Frye has said that were it not for the "protecting wall" of the drama, melodrama could be considered "advance propaganda for the police state."<sup>5</sup> If one argues that that wall need not be so protective, there is considerable reason to accept his statement as valid.

There are, however, certain aspects of the melodramatic structure which may be considered constant. This is not the same as identifying a "melodramatic vision" throughout literary history. Critics of melodrama, notably Bentley, Brooks and Booth, have developed useful approaches to the genre based on certain recurring psychological traits. These traits do appear to be constant, but alone, they do not suffice to define the genre.

Critics of melodrama agree on certain specific traits: the characteristic exaggeration of emotional action, and what Brooks calls the manicheistic contest between good and evil.<sup>6</sup> Bentley calls it a paranoid vision of the universe, maintaining that the use of extreme emotion and outrageous coincidence intensify this paranoia.<sup>7</sup> Coincidence, he says, "enlists circumstance in the enemy rank...it represents a projection of "irrational" fear." In this scheme, the catharsis of tragedy is in melodrama fear for our own weakness, and self-pity, through identification with the threatened hero. Bentley has addressed his exploration to the enduring popularity of melodrama, seeking to define that aspect which holds our attention,



and has concluded, like Booth,<sup>8</sup> that melodrama is "the naturalism of the dream life". This is the source of his claim that melodrama is the "quintessence of drama", for it deals with conflicts which though disguised in the trappings of the day, reach far beyond ethical or moral considerations, to the realm of the naked ego pitted against the universe.

This psychological approach is valuable in that it suggests certain formal distinctions for melodrama. Peter Brooks has analyzed at length the nature of the audience's rapport with melodramatic action, concluding that it offers us "heroic confrontation, purgation, purification, recognition. But its recognition is essentially of the integers in combat and the need to take sides."<sup>9</sup> His analysis extends into the sociological, for as he points out, it is the semiotics of the psychological representation which is important.

"There is no psychology in melodrama in this sense [Character Structure]; the characters have no interior depth, there is no psychological conflict. It is delusive to seek an interior conflict, the "psychology of melodrama", because melodrama exteriorizes conflict and psychic structure, producing instead what we might call "the melodrama of psychology". What we have is a drama of pure signs called Father, Daughter, Protector, Persecutor, Judge, Duty, Obedience, Justice, that interest us through their clash, by the dramatic space created through their interplay, providing the means for their resolution." 10

In contrast to those critics who argue that the introduction of psychology in melodrama militates against the very idea of melodrama, Brooks goes on to suggest that psychoanalysis itself, that motor of modern drama, is a "systematic realization of the melodramatic aesthetic, applied to the structure

and dynamic of the mind." He sees in the manicheistic conflict of melodrama a figuration of the "dynamics of repression" contained in the Freudian structure of ego, superego, and id.<sup>11</sup>

I have quoted Brooks at length because he has given us the most thorough defense of melodrama as a psychological phenomenon. His analysis provides a means, which most do not, of explaining the bulk of modern drama within the context of melodrama. But even this approach is problematical, for with the rare exception of the penetrating genius, such as Ibsen, psychology in modern drama is usually contained within a theoretical framework, be it Freudian, Jungian or Behaviourist. Psychological action is based on certainties familiar to the audience. Brooks is not arguing, of course, that we must study the playwright's intention in order to determine the principles of his work; rather, his approach complements Northrop Frye's. Nevertheless, psychology is still very much a theoretical discipline. Its use as critical tool is certainly valuable, as Frye's work attests, but it cannot be expected to provide a complete interpretive system.

Part of the problem is that unlike tragedy, which is usually evaluated in light of Aristotle's observations, melodrama lacks an authoritative theorist. Rather, as the form evolved, it has required a good number of critics to explain the various permutations, reflecting the superficial inconstancy of the form. Throughout the centuries, tragedy was analyzed in reference to the models of the Greek dramatists and their first critic, so that all dialogue on the nature

of the form was based on interpreting its sources. But melodrama cannot be discussed against the standard of a fixed origin. Although it is usually said to have originated with Rousseau's Pygmalion, the problem occurs that the very term has been used to describe a number of different forms. Thus even nomenclature admits confusion. We can, as Brooks has done, define operative traits in the relation of the drama as an expression of the audience's collective psyche and the shape of ethical conflict, for in this sense, the differences between Kotzebue and the modern Hollywood screenwriter are minor indeed.

Definitions tend to be diagnostic, based on observation of recurring traits. So it is that melodrama is characterized by exaggeration, or improbability, and dualistic conflict with its inevitable victory for the forces of virtue. Consequently, melodrama is accepted as unrealistic. Booth calls it an "idealization and simplification of the world of reality..[it is] the world its audience wants but cannot get"<sup>12</sup> Its focus on externals--the signs mentioned by Brooks-- is seen as contradictory to realism. Even though modern drama may be typified by its reaction to modern psychology, especially Freudian theory, distinction is commonly made between those plays which exteriorize psychological traits, and those which attempt to express the psychological complexities of the individual. As a style, realism is based upon the psychological contradictions of the individual within society. And yet, this in itself does not preclude melodrama.



## The Principles of Melodrama

Melodrama might be briefly defined as that genre of the drama which isolates a dramatic situation in terms of antagonistic moral absolutes, which bear a symbolic relation to the social values of the audience. It assumes responsibility for the moral conflict it presents, by promising a pre-determined victory for an idea of good. In this assumption of responsibility, melodrama is dependent on ideology, and in its use of fantastic invention, it simplifies complex material and ethical issues, and makes them sensible to the audience.

It may be, that melodrama is the genre most suited to modern realism. If an antithesis to realism as a mode of perception as well as a style is to be sought, it may perhaps be found in tragedy. This is not to say that tragedy and realism cannot be reconciled--obviously, the reverse is true. I am referring rather to a dialectical adaptation of nature. If tragedy justifies the order of being, by expressing its permanence through glimpses of its mysteries, realism attempts to diminish and transform the external universe into rational values. Realism objectifies nature, and fragments it in a humanistic universe which is best expressed through mimetic action. Tragedy in comparison expresses man's significance in relation to an inhumane universe; it seeks to explain rather than transform. In tragedy, morality is made clear as a consequence of a vaster universe than man can comprehend;



whereas realism is based upon an idea of moral pre-determination. As man's material world changes, so do his ideas of morality, for morals are but the indexes which govern the relationships of man and society.

Realism is based upon a positive relationship between man, as individual and community, and the world of nature. It is therefore an interpretive device. Melodrama is one of the means by which that interpretation is given substance as mimesis. It is not the only such means--comedy as well performs a similar function--but in the modern age, melodrama may be the most apt form of expression. Certainly, it has proven most effective.

An antithesis to melodrama may be found in the epic, as developed by Brecht. It is here that we may see the mechanism of one of the two defining qualities of melodrama most clearly, for Brecht's theories have given us a new perspective by which the characteristics of Aristotlean drama may be measured. The two qualities are responsibility, which includes melodrama's dependence on ideology, and probability. These parallel the usual defining functions of dualistic conflict and exaggeration. As the latter is the less involved, it may be dealt with first.

Melodrama depends upon an accommodation of technology, in the broadest sense of the term, and one of its functions is to make coherent to its audience vast changes which it might otherwise fail to comprehend, due to what has become known as "future shock", the inability of the mind to accom-

moderate the significance of rapid technological and social change. This may be seen in a limited sense in the remarkable fascination with spectacle and stage machinery on the Victorian Stage, as well as the integration of scientific technology with the drama in our own time. The amazing contraptions of the Victorian stage, with its innovative scene change systems, flying devices, and traps, as well as the sophisticated use of realistic scene painting, all point to a desire to integrate the advances of the industrial revolution with the common lives of the population. This affects both the means of theatrical production, and the drama itself. Machines lose their awesome mystery when reduced to the level of dramatic characterization. In the process of industrial alienation, the design, construction and operation of a steam locomotive may be beyond the comprehension of the London worker, and thus intimidating, as it suggests the ascendancy of a new class of specialized technicians, but the introduction of the locomotive as merely a large and noisy weapon of the villain in his usual attempt to kill the hero is understandable. The details of the machine may be beyond understanding, but its use, and meaning, is not.

Similarly, the many new traps on the Victorian Stage contrived to make essentially common situations, fantastic though they may be, more realistic in appearance. Even a casual reading of nineteenth century journalistic reviews will provide any number which praise plays for their verisimilitude in scene design. These innovations did not make the action of the plays more believable, any more than the special

effects of a science fiction film do today. It does give them a measure of credibility. Technological advances are reduced to commonplaces in the popular imagination, while their material implications may go ignored. Audiences today will delight in the fantasy of super laser guns blasting starships out of orbit, while ignoring the very real uses of laser in contemporary weapons systems.

Melodrama is also transformed qualitatively by technological advance. It is here that we may see a partial solution to the problem of a defining constant. Whereas tragedy has only had to make one major historical adjustment, the transition from feudal to individual-oriented social systems (and critics still argue whether it has survived), melodrama must re-adjust constantly. The very shape of melodrama changes in this process of re-adjustment.

A century ago, new possibilities of action were introduced with every technological innovation. The development of the modern scrim and electrical lighting together revolutionized the scenic capacities of the theatre, and new traps provided new and novel means of egress from the stage, and consequently, from new and novel dramatic situations. When actors could seemingly disappear through a solid wall, playwrights were given the material to create plays calling for that device. And in doing so, they created new situations which required new effects.<sup>13</sup>

The principles of melodrama apply to these advances, although the result may be unintelligible to one unfamiliar with the specific technological innovations. As is the case with Victorian melodrama, technology is reduced to simple



moral and procedural problems, the solutions of which are intrinsic to their composition. As technology advances (and even the idea of advancement is a moralistic interpretation), so does dramatic structure. The traditional five-act structure gave way to the three-act play, which in turn has been challenged. Form itself is a kind of literary technology, conditioned by habit and usefulness.

This process of accommodation is not confined to material technology; it includes, as the discussion of Tecumseh will show, ideology as well.

But as melodrama makes awesome facts intelligible, so does it make the ordinary improbable. All forms of art impose a pattern of thought and idea on recognizable human action, for the final purpose of form can be defined as making action sensible. Form is tempered by decorum, the formalizing of action in terms of probability and believability. Form regulates behaviour, and determines probability. We do not consider it excessive in a police thriller for the villain to murder at whim for no apparent reason, but such actions in a love romance would be unacceptable.

In part, decorum can be explained by Frye's theory of mimetic modes. His argument rests on the fact that art, western art in particular, can be analyzed in terms of identifiable structural traits, which reflect constants of human experience. Frye's theories, along with Bentley's idea of "neurosis", provide a valid explanation for the recurrence of exaggerated conflicts in melodrama. Reality is



given fantastic dimension, and with it, that part of the audience mind which identifies with the conflict is enlarged.

But there is a political function to this process as well, in a non-ideological sense. The idea of melodrama rests on two political concepts shared by the collective mind of the audience: a consensus on what is fitting in action, and what is desirable. The two are often one in simple melodrama, but not necessarily so. Melodramatic action resolves conflict in a fitting matter, and the unspoken consensus, which may be identified in the very structure of the society, is affirmed. But melodrama will often only suggest the desirable state of being, rather than showing it achieved; for the presence of a threat is integral to the form, as it is to society. This threat itself is often desirable, paradoxically, for it provides a test in which the champion, be he the sailor hero of the Victorian nautical drama, or the secret agent of today, is strengthened in resolve and ability.

In a play like Lewis' The Bells, it is fitting that Mathias should die of contrition for his abominable crime, but it is not necessarily desirable that he should escape social justice. Or, in the typical temperance saloon drama, the action will conclude with the debauched father taking the oath, and returning to his family, as is fit. It is not desirable, however, that the play leaves the world awash with liquor. So long as the desired state is out of immediate reach, the challenge continues, and the very idea of melodrama is revalidated. Melodrama, although it glorifies

an idea of virtue, thrives on imperfection. It accepts that conflict is not only inevitable, it is necessary. That melodrama appears to flourish in societies dedicated to utopian ideologies does not contradict this, for utopia is ever remote, and can only be reached after long periods of struggle. Brooks' assertion that melodrama is manicheistic holds as much in the Soviet Union as in North America.

The question of decorum is a question of proportion, and this is where Bentley's ideas of neurosis are useful. The wild coincidences and exaggerations of melodrama enlist, as Bentley has said, circumstance in the enemy rank. But the very idea of circumstance is socially determined as well. In Victorian England, for example, the source of so many of our ideas of melodrama, circumstances produced coincidences unacceptable to a modern audience. But Britain at that time was expanding towards the largest empire ever known on earth, in which some thirty millions subjugated ten times their number. It is a tenet of imperialism that an inexorable destiny, be it divine or material, favours the conqueror. It may be that this sense of providence tempers unlikely situations, for in the imperialist creed, success, and the idea of winning against all odds, becomes a truism.

To our eyes today, the exaggerations of the Victorian melodrama are incredible, but those of our own melodrama are contained within an acceptable shaping of events. That the lawman always saves the day is by no means a statistical fact-- actually, the opposite is true-- but we accept it as a cert-

ainty in our drama. Our wants, as Bentley has suggested, are superimposed on the action, and so are our doubts. We know full well that in actuality, the criminal would make good his escape, or be caught in much less exciting fashion, and for that reason, we enjoy seeing the lie. Melodrama does exaggerate certain traits, with the audience's permission, so to speak, but it also diminishes probability, by avoiding contradictions within the audience and the very formulation of conflict.

The question of responsibility is simply that of the audience's relation to the dramatic conflict of the melodrama. According to Brooks,

Melodramatic dilemmas and choices are constructed on the either/or in its extreme form as the all-or-nothing. Polarization is both horizontal and vertical: characters represent extremes, and they undergo extremes, passing from heights to depths, or the reverse, almost instantaneously. The middle ground and the middle conditions are excluded... Polarization is not only a dramatic principle, but the very means by which integral ethical conditions are identified and shaped, made clear and operative.<sup>14</sup>

The melodramatic conflict has long been recognized as dualistic; it involves an idea of virtue, which must be defended against an idea of vice. Good and evil are convenient labels for psychological constants. Good, or virtue, is associated with those elements of ourselves and our society which we cherish, and evil, or vice, is associated with those elements which disturb us. Less constant, however, is the collective idea of what virtue and vice mean, for this is the ever-changing element of melodrama that is always dependent on the part-



iculars of its society.

Critics of the Victorian drama point out that melodrama often has a populist bias, and that plays like My Poll and My Partner Joe, which argues the evils of impressment, are works of social protest. It can be easily surmised from this that melodrama, because it is a popular art, is independent of the power structures of society.

In fact, this view is delusive. Perhaps it is only in light of Brecht's revolutionary aesthetic of the epic theatre that we can see the ideological bias of melodrama clearly. As Brecht theorized, the epic drama is critical; its action advances by means of a dialectical argument, which uses montage as its principal rhetorical device. The use of the dialectical technique confronts the audience with the final responsibility for the outcome of the stage action, by depicting the action as a contradiction. The melodramatic structure, in comparison, assumes that responsibility on behalf of its audience, and contains the neurosis of which Bentley speaks. This fact has been recognized often. Frye calls it the "protecting wall of the drama"; Brecht in his notes to Mahagonny, called it "culinary". Melodrama, like tragedy, offers a conflict that is resolved before it commences and, like tragedy, it performs a function for the community through the re-enactment of a cathartic event. But unlike tragedy, which attempts to force an insight into the mystery of why this solution has to be, melodrama excuses the conflict and makes it simple. In this sense, it is a conservative form,

when measured against the values of its society. Even when the play is a work of social criticism, as many melodramas aspire to be, the action finally rests on unstated assumptions held by the audience, and adheres to decorum.<sup>15</sup>

In the Victorian era, an age not polarized along the modern ideological lines, the dramas which attacked impressment and judicial inequity never attacked the root causes for that injustice, and so despite the political gesture of protest, affirmed the fundamental conditions of the society. The workingman's lot would be just, if impressment were eliminated, if judicial reform gave him fair treatment in court, that is, if the conditions of life were modified, rather than changed.

With the rise of Marxism as a political fact in the world, the distinctions between controversial and establishment art in the Victorian era were lost in the far greater polarization between revolutionary and bourgeois aesthetics. Marxism has made of liberalism an invective, and as a result, conventional liberalistic social criticism has been made to appear no more than a panacea. Whether one accepts this view is beside the point; the polarization remains as an established fact. It has given birth to a new form of ideological criticism, which attempts to define the contradictions of this polarization. This polarization has introduced the idea of co-option into the critical vocabulary, and while the term itself has gained widespread popularity only in the last decade, the idea lay at the base of Eric Bentley's 1947 essay, "The Broadway Intelligentsia".<sup>16</sup>

Melodrama is conservative in this sense because when confronted by the challenge of a radical alternative in the form of epic drama it continues to re-affirm the standards of its audience. Even the dualistic conflict of melodrama serves this purpose, for it is by no means true that conflict in the life of an individual or society can be defined in terms of two sides to a problem. This manicheism, while it does express very real psychological pressures, simplifies moral issues to a matter of ethical alignment. Here too melodrama assumes responsibility, for it avoids contradictions, and thus permits the audience to cherish dualistic illusions.

If melodrama wages simplified combat for its audience, and gives them pre-determined victory, it is apparent that the identity of the enemy--the villain--can relate to any number of common fears and threats. The crime thriller prefers a national or class enemy; the horror thriller prefers the supernatural. Even in the so-called psychological drama, the villain usually represents an unsavoury aspect of the psyche. Often, the villain is an anthropomorphic symbol for a nameless threat, but even then, his identity can be surmised by an examination of his antithesis, the hero or heroine. For instance, it may be that in the common maid-in-distress melodrama of a century ago, the heroine personified certain national interests. She was fair, virtuous, strong-minded and clever; in a word, a national self-reflection of Britannia, fighting for her due on three continents. Similarly, in that great classic of the nineteenth-century stage, Uncle Tom's Cabin,



Simon Legree was more than a slaver. He was the abolitionist's fantasy of the South incarnate, a cunning, ruthless dandy. The approach holds today as well. What is the James Bond figure, or the television cop, but a symbolic representation of governmental authority?

Brooks spoke of the characters in melodrama as signs standing for certain value traits such as obedience, justice, and duty. Because of its dualistic function, as well as its material existence as a commercial profit-making agency, it is inevitable that the melodrama should derive its morality from its audience. This explains why melodrama is the form of mimesis most favoured by propagandists, for it can present polemical ideas in emotional terms, and by reducing opposing arguments to the symbolic level of the villain, identify the propagandist's aim with virtue.

#### Melodrama and Patriotism

Melodrama is suited to majority interests, and as such is most successful when it reflects matters of broad appeal. Thus, abstract values, which exist to explain or excuse material conditions, enter aesthetics. Few today would be surprised by the expressions "responsible" and "decadent" art, although these terms refer to values extrinsic to the actual work in question. This fusion of idealism and aesthetics has always been a condition of melodrama.

If the ascendancy of melodrama can be attributed to the rise of Romanticism, as is likely, it will be seen that

it was a function of a new idea of man's idealistic relation to the universe. Melodrama has always advocated a concept of the good and the virtuous, and it is not unusual, historically, for plays to be judged according to their success in transmitting these values. During the Victorian assault against "immoral" drama this condition was so pronounced that Harriet Beecher Stowe initially forbade adaptation of Uncle Tom's Cabin to the stage, lest "respectable and moral" plays attract young people to the less savoury dramas.<sup>17</sup> As the most popular of public arts, the drama was--and still is, despite its minority position--distrusted. Artistic ability was seen as a corollary to moral excellence, an idea which still persists in modified form. Melodrama is still judged by its moral attitude; if a television show or stage play expresses a "correct" view of a moral issue, it is deemed acceptable, even worthy. Today still, police are empowered in Canada to close a stage play upon a single anonymous complaint, and censorship exists in a critical sense, as when a playwright is rebuked for "unnecessary" excess of language, violence, or sexual explicitness. Today, that process is more subtle than it was a century ago. Wilfred Campbell, the "Poet of the Lakes" wrote a perfect example of this moral determinism in 1904:

I would lay it down as an axiom that in literature and art the style as it is called, if it is natural, is but a product of the message of the writer or artist. Our message in life is but our final idea concerning truth and man's relation with the infinite...In short, to have a message is to have a soul, to be concerned in the deeper issues of

heaven and hell; to know a sense of honour and a sense of shame, an idea of manhood.... 18

Campbell, like many of his contemporaries, saw no distinction between the writer's world-view (a phrase he favoured) and literary ability. His remarks may appear extreme today, but in light of Victorian social thought, with its constants of honour, manhood, beauty and truth, he expressed no more than we commonly find expressed today. Our constants have changed perhaps; instead of honour, we might find a concern for honesty. But the relative significance of abstract ideals and aesthetics remains fundamentally unchanged.

It is against these constants that the late nineteenth-century critics spoke of the decline of the drama. Although they perceived that the economic structures of the commercial theatre were inhibiting innovation they, like Campbell, ascribed the decline to "degeneration", as the idea was popularized by Max Nordau. Campbell, for instance, when criticising Ibsen, wrote that "both author and audience thought they were probing the deeps of man's nature and solving his reason for being; when they were only hypnotized by a morbid tendency toward the tainted or rotten side of humanity."<sup>19</sup>

Although this same principle of idealism is as central to melodrama today as it has ever been, for the present purpose it can best be discussed in reference to another major social condition which arrived at its present form in the nineteenth-century: patriotism. This discussion refers to the nineteenth-century concept of patriotism not because it



is intrinsically more appropriate to a discussion of melodrama, but because these specific examples will prove useful in the subsequent analysis of Tecumseh.

Patriotism, so-called, is a cipher, referring to any number of conditions at work at a given time. For the present purpose, it can be simply defined as that creed which dictates that love of country and loyalty to that country's institutions and traditions, is the honour-bound obligation of the citizen. It is related to nationalism, that doctrine of group self-recognition based on a common language or history, but is not necessarily the same. The Victorians thought of patriotism as a moral faculty, as many do today. Love of country, and subordination of one's own desires to that country's needs (codified as "duty") was considered an integral part of man's spiritual character. In the political context of the nineteenth-century, patriotism was usually based on race-nationalism, given intellectual respectability by the doctrine of Social Darwinism. As Sir George Robert Parkin, the eminent Canadian educator and Imperial Federalist declared in 1911, patriotism was allied to an idea of providence:

"I am one of those who believe that extended power and influence are not given to nations without some Divine purpose. I am convinced that when the moral energy of a nation does not rise to the fulfillment of that purpose, the nation is doomed to decay." 20

Today, that statement reads as a rhetorical apology for British imperialism, but at the time, the dualistic

struggle of energy and decay, in an arena of race and culture, was hardly unusual. Nor was it uniquely British; in America this creed was called Anglo-Saxonism (to borrow a phrase from the American novelist Winston Churchill)<sup>21</sup>, and in Germany the newly formed Reich was employing similar precepts of Teutonic culture.

The Victorian intellectuals preferred to use the term civilization rather than culture, and like Parkin, wrote in a language rich in rhetorical prejudice. A vigorous civilization was characterized as masculine, and virility itself was as much a moral attribute as a physical condition, applicable to races no less than individuals. Racialism was moralistic as well; Campbell, in his denunciation of modern drama, referred to Shakespeare as the greatest poet of all time because of his sanity, and wrote that "he never said a word or expressed an idea that was not essentially British to the core."<sup>22</sup> Sanity was a British attribute, a consequence of the mixture of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon temperaments. In contrast, he maintained that though Tolstoy was a great writer, he could not be considered "genius." Tolstoy, said Campbell, was a pessimist, and this argued against a well-balanced mind. Further, he was Russian, and the Russian race, being a mixture of the European and the Oriental, could not be considered wholly sane.<sup>23</sup>

This qualifying of cultures in individualistic terms is an understandable consequence of political chauvinism, the dominant ideology of the late nineteenth-century. War was

seen as an expression of national will, and this bellicosity influenced aesthetics. An example may be found in Ferdinand Brunetière's 1894 essay, "The Law of the Drama", in which he asserted that "it is always at the exact moment of its national existence when the will of a great people is exalted ...within itself, that we see its dramatic art also reach the highest point of its development...."<sup>24</sup>

National will is a euphemism for expansionism, which demands increased production in all spheres of social activity, whether or not that expansion is successful or fulfilled. It is noteworthy that the literary "renaissance" in Canada in the 1870s-80s coincided with the new Dominion's expansion into the vast hinterland of the Northwest, and that the current phase of cultural nationalism coincides with a wide-spread reappraisal of the benefits of the economic and ideological influence of the United States.

National will, as Campbell implied, was a requisite for a national literature. In Canada, as has been mentioned, this was to create critical difficulties, which are briefly analyzed in the following chapter. But no matter how difficult the "search for a national literature" was to prove, it remained fixed within a dualistic idea of culture. Naturally not all writers subscribed to the simple view that that art which expressed worthy sentiment was necessarily good, but the general conditions of criticism were sophisticated developments of that idea. In the nineteenth-century, patriotism was perhaps the most noble sentiment of them all.



In England and Canada, it was expressed by a sentimental enlargement of the moral qualities of imperialism; in America it glorified an idea of liberty. David Grimstead has written that

Although "patriotic feeling" was stressed as "one of the first of the virtues", American plays avoided pure chauvinism by usually connecting devotion to country with pride in its freedom, justice, and political equality. 25

Plays avoided pure chauvinism because the ideal was already embodied in the very structure of the melodrama, as ideologies always are.

Analyzed strictly by structural definitions Tecumseh is not melodrama, for it has other pretensions. But its contradictions and flaws, as well as achievements, are best understood within the context of melodrama as outlined above.

Because it can accommodate revolutionary changes in human consciousness, melodrama is best defined in light of its operative principles, as opposed to empiric characteristics. Commonly, those principles are isolated through a survey of representative plays. In the subsequent chapters of this study, I propose to do the opposite; that is, illustrate by means of an unrepresentative play the ideological determination of melodrama. That Charles Mair wrote Tecumseh in an attempt to create a national literature for the new Canadian nation makes these principles more readily identifiable.

## CHAPTER TWO

### NATIONAL SENTIMENT AND POETIC DRAMA

#### The Idea of National Sentiment

Techumseh is the most notable of a group of plays written for the deliberate purpose of encouraging what was called a national sentiment in post-Confederation Canada, and its problems may be attributed in the end to that purpose.

Although it cannot be stated as a general principle that polemical art is by definition inferior--obviously, this is not so--it must be recognized that the aesthetic worth of polemical art is a function of the principles which inform it. The inadequacies of Tecumseh can be explained in part by its allegiance to political principles which ring unsound today, and to the artistic form determined by those principles. Kipling proved that one could base remarkable poetry on the morality of British Imperialism, but his was the rare exception.<sup>1</sup> Mair was not only trying to celebrate a political ideal, he was also trying to create enthusiasm for what we might call a secondary clause of that ideal. His patriotism was both Canadian and British; it could abide with no distinction. But because of that he had to prove to the Canadian reading public that the artistic life of Canada was not necessarily inferior to that of Britain just

because it was derivative.

In 1890, an anonymous satirist asked in the pages of the Dominion Illustrated,

Why is it--fur ye know it's true--  
The last thing a Canuck will do,  
Is read a work that's from the pen  
Uv one uv his own countrymen? 2

Although that lament is still heard, and for similar reasons, a century ago the situation of the Canadian author was even more desperate. The Canadian nation, newly forged by the legislative union of a group of disparate colonies, lacked a cohesive cultural pattern. Mair himself had been raised as a colonialist in Canada West, and like most Canadians living outside Quebec, looked towards Britain and the United States for an idea of culture, a not unnatural condition in a small and culturally underdeveloped nation. As recent colonial subjects, English-speaking Canadians thought of themselves as transplanted Britons. When writers began to explore the cultural meaning of this new nation whose citizens they became, it is natural that they should have done so by attempting to integrate their British heritage with their North American soil. If Canada was to be a nation in its own right within the framework of the Empire, it was necessary that a native voice be recognized in the arts and literature, Kipling provided an appropriate self-image for the young Dominion with his celebrated couplet from "Our Lady of the Snows", which begins, "Daughter am I in my mother's house/ but mistress in my own."

Mair himself expressed the ideal of Canadian nation-



hood and its relation to culture in 1875, in the pages of the Canadian Monthly:

This new Dominion should be the wedding of pure taste, simple life, respect for age and authority and the true principles of free government on this continent...it has a history to make, a national sentiment to embody, and a national idea to carry out.

The genuine and most important result of that operation is the creation of a national idea of sentiment, which has for its internal condition unity and for its external aspect force...<sup>3</sup>

While it may be argued that the Canadian confederation was anything but unified and forceful, nationhood meant to Mair and his fellow patriots (many of them, like himself, members of the Canada First movement) the consolidation of British traditions amongst a population dwarfed by that of the United States. If Canadians were to develop as a distinct people, the true "men of the north" to borrow Haliburton's phrase, then that quality had to be expressed in a national literature. The clarion call for this literary revival was sounded by Thomas D'Arcy McGee in November of 1867, when he called upon "the young minds of the Dominion" to study the cultural workings of other countries, so that they might be inspired to a "hearty zeal for doing something in their own right, on their own soil." From a population of four million" he claimed, "we ought to yield in every generation forty eminent, if not illustrious men."<sup>4</sup>

In retrospect, it would appear that this original attempt to create a national literature by invocation was fallacious, as Goldwin Smith observed 1893, when he maintained

that "without any disparagement of our native genius, we must answer that no such thing as a literature Canadian in the local sense exists or is likely to exist. "Canada" is a political expression. There is no literary unity."<sup>5</sup>

In a narrow sense, Smith was correct. A distinctly Canadian literature did emerge in the late nineteenth-century, but it was derivative of British, and less commonly, American models. But even this body of literature was not, like the very idea of Canadian nationhood itself, reflective of a uniquely Canadian attitude towards life. It was an adaptation of British traditions to the Canadian map, and an assimilation of the Canadian experience into the broader category of British culture. That the British regarded this as colonial phenomenon did not deter Canadian writers, some of whom frankly predicted that in some future age, the burden of Empire might shift to Canada's shoulders. The idea of a Canadian literature was meant to be similar in principle to that of a Scottish or Welsh literature; one integral part of a greater glory.

This search, as we may call it, although there was more of the invention than the search about it, was an aspect of a colonial bourgeois idea of nationalism, and one might perceive in it a secularization of Matthew Arnold's idea of culture. Arnold's writings were well known in Canada; indeed, Mair's Canada First colleague and literary encourager, George Denison, had received Arnold at his Toronto home, and won from him some faint praise for a manu-

script passage of Tecumseh. In Culture and Anarchy, Arnold had provided a definition of culture based on the human passion for "sweetness and light", that is, an ideal of human perfection, and "idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all its sides."<sup>6</sup> In the romantic patriotism of the late Victorian age, with its pretenses to scientific reason and which allowed, as discussed, for a social and moral idealism suited to the very concept of melodrama, Arnold's prescription for the perfect man became vulgarized as an ideal of the perfect citizen. As romantic patriotism was one consequence of expansionist race-nationalism, Arnold's ideal meeting of morality and art enabled bourgeois writers to justify their taste for sentimental patriotism in terms of a cultural morality. In fact, it may be argued that in Arnold's sense, writers like Mair never achieved the level of art. Expounding upon Goethe, Arnold maintained that what

"distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur.... is Architectonice in the highest sense; that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes; not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration."<sup>7</sup>

Mair was content to direct his not inconsiderable talents towards unquestioned ends. His idea of morality, as witnessed by Tecumseh, was safely within the bounds of the Church of England and the bourgeois liberalism of Imperial Britain. He attempted to synthesize a national expression in his work, and to a limited extent he succeeded.



His concept of what constituted that expression was however less clear, as will be seen in the examination of the play Tecumseh. Mair might well have agreed with the anonymous critic, who responded to Goldwin Smith's pessimism by writing that,

Perhaps it is not strictly accurate to say that there is a national feeling in Canada, for a Colony is not a nation; but there is a Canadian sentiment strong and vigourous and animating, and this sentiment must and will find expression in native production and from a native press. 8

In order to express that sentiment, Mair chose a colonial theme. Tecumseh celebrates an Indian chief who collaborated with the British in order to revenge himself against American injustices to his people.

One can detect and identify certain class interests in this choice. The Canadian bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth-century was not wholly secure in its patriotism; the annexation movement revealed a strong pro-American tendency, especially amongst the business class, and the massive influx of working-class immigrants introduced a variety of national and class loyalties, as well as antipathies. And of course, there was the matter of the French-speaking population of Quebec, which was not entirely satisfied with the structure of Confederation, much less with the British connection. That Mair chose a hero whose actions identified him with the propriety of the British Empire is easily understood, for the myth-making process of Canadian history had prepared him by establishing the conditions in such a way that Canadian interests were identified wholly with Britain.

Tecumseh is set in the War of 1812, a period which provided not only a sense of heroism and romance, but an ideological basis for Canadian nationalism.

In the Imperialist version of popular history, the War of 1812 cemented the national foundations of Canada. It was seen, and to some extent still is, as a popular resistance against a rapacious and powerful invader, in which the yeomanry of Canada was led to victory by a small corps of British officers. The real heroes were held to be the descendants of the United Empire Loyalists, the settlers who were deprived of their livelihood in the Thirteen Colonies because they remained loyal to the crown. The Loyalists themselves became a symbol of the British presence in Canada, as opposed to the later groups of immigrants, who were attracted by land grants, and many of whom maintained their American sympathies. By the 1880s, the right to bear the initials U.E. after one's name was a mark of social pedigree, much like the American practice of tracing one's descent to the Pilgrim Fathers. Mair himself seems to have felt the lack of Loyalist heritage in his family keenly. In 1884, he wrote to Denison that the significance of the initials were now "applicable all round to those who think that the destinies of our people in all parts of the world are to be wrought out through a close attachment of the whole imperial system... I feel I am as much a U.E. Loyalist as you or anybody." <sup>9</sup>

Berger points out that the patriots of the late

nineteenth-century regarded the Loyalists as their spiritual forebears,<sup>10</sup> and did not hesitate to alter the facts to suit their purpose. It was held that the sixty-thousand Loyalists who settled in New Brunswick, Lower Canada, and Upper Canada were "the very cream of the population of the Thirteen Colonies";<sup>11</sup> and that "no country in the world ever received a better class of immigrants."<sup>12</sup> The Loyalist cult established two poles of Canadian nationalism. It was inherently anti-American, for it glorified a group that was hounded for its beliefs, subjected to abuse, and deprived of its lands because it would not abide with treason, and it was equally pro-British, for the Loyalists sought refuge and liberty under the Union Flag. The Canadian Imperialists believed that the British constitutional monarchy was by virtue of its social hierarchies a greater guarantee of individual rights and freedom than the "mobocracy" to the south. The struggle of the Loyalists, and that of their children in the War of 1812, established a militant antecedent for the post-Confederation era. Further, the Loyalist tradition established a concept of racial hegemony in Canada; Mair's generation did not trust the Québécois, and considered their part in the American Revolution to be equivocal at best. And as for the exploits of the Québécois militia in the War of 1812, it will be seen that Mair did not see fit to mention them in Tecumseh.

In essence, the glorification of the Loyalist was an attempt to create what John Porter has called a "charter myth"<sup>13</sup> a foundation of national sentiment created in struggle, and



thus, an act of national will. For the late Victorian revisionists, the War of 1812 consolidated the Loyalist tradition, for it was accepted that it was the descendants of the Loyalists who made up the militia, which in turn was responsible for victory. Of the militial legend, the military historian C. P Stacey has written,

It is perfectly true that the militia played an essential part of the defense of Canada, but it was still a secondary part. The country was not defended in 1812 merely by youngsters fresh from the tail of the plough. It was scientifically defended by men trained for the job...Upper Canada was saved in the campaign of 1812 because the province was actually better prepared for war than the United States. 14

Stacey argues the now-accepted view that Upper Canada was defended primarily by British regular troops (of which some regiments were indeed raised in Canada) and that the militia was usually engaged in support and logistics roles. But the militia legend is as old as the war itself. A sermon delivered in the town of York (now Toronto) in November of 1812, presumably by John Strachan, Bishop of York and architect of the governing Family Compact, maintained that,

It will be told by our future historians that the province of Upper Canada, without the assistance of men or arms, except a handfull of regular troops, repelled its invader, slew or took them all prisoners...And never, surely, was greater activity shown any country than our militia have exhibited, never greater valour, and more approved conduct....15

If the historians later chose not to tell this story, the poets did. Tecumseh is a paean to the militia legend, and contains distortions of the actual events in order to reinforce its theme.

In order to create a national culture, it may be argued, it is necessary to create myths.<sup>16</sup> And like all myths, the one Mair tried to fashion out of the militia legend had a truthful basis. Certainly the whole province was mobilized during the war, and without question, the invasion was repelled. But it is not too extreme to typify these attempts as myth-making, not simply because their accounts were larger than life, but because they attempted to use historical events to embody and illustrate imponderable principles of being. A myth attempts to explain through an event or happening the larger significance of the order of being, and to make clear intangible principles. The attempt to create a myth out of the War of 1812 was of course fallacious; indeed, the very concept of a national myth, especially when it is arbitrarily designed, is subject to fallacies, for it defines culture in terms of constitution.

"National sentiment," in the poet's vocabulary of the late nineteenth-century was akin to what Goldwin Smith called "literary unity": a concept of national culture based on the growing body of literature and art through the centuries. In vain, Mair and the propagandists of Canada First and the later Imperial Federation League, attempted to win recognition in Great Britain for Canadian history and literature. As British patriots, they felt--not unreasonably, perhaps--that the struggle of the Loyalists to save the British connection in North America was a major event in the history of the Empire, but the British preferred to think of the War of

1812, when they thought of it at all, as a provincial aspect of the much greater struggle on the European continent. Beside the battles of Trafalgar and Waterloo, the skirmishes of Lake Erie and Beaver Dam are significant only to those who hold a stake in their results. Mair was to encounter this diffidence personally, when his negotiations for a British edition of Tecumseh fell through, apparently because of disinterest in London.

But in Canada, Tecumseh especially was singled out as major achievement towards a Canadian literature. The Montreal Gazette suggested that the play deserved "honourable recognition in the metropolis of English literature,"<sup>17</sup> and even as late as 1906, it was stated that "Tecumseh will take a foremost and enduring place in our Canadian letters."<sup>18</sup> But perhaps the most revealing remark of all was that of the critic who praised the play because there was not a classical allusion to be found in the text<sup>19</sup>. We can see here the notable quality of Tecumseh and similar works for the Victorian readership; they seemed to successfully integrate the Canadian sensibility,<sup>20</sup> with a traditional form, thus reaffirming the culture interdependency of Canada and a Britain from which they were so often excluded. This suggests an answer to the first major critical question about these plays, which asks why they were written in the form of poetic drama.

#### The Poetic Drama

Michael Tait has argued that of the factors accounting



for the obvious mediocrity of early Canadian drama, "the most decisive was the separation of the nineteenth-century playwright from the active theatre of his time".<sup>21</sup> He attributes this separation to the audiences' preference for imported plays. "For want of even a minority demand for the performance of native plays, these would-be dramatists were compelled willy-nilly to write for the closet rather than the stage..."<sup>22</sup> In fact, there was a minority demand for Canadian plays, but the actor-managers of the nineteenth-century could afford only to respond to the majority demands. Although critics were calling for a native literature in the immediate post-Confederation years, it was not until the first decade of the present century that a strong demand for Canadian drama could be heard, in the writings of men like B.K. Sandwell and Fred Jacob.<sup>23</sup> By that time, critics had been influenced by the development of modern realism and the thesis-play, as well as growing recognition of the monopolistic control exerted by the American syndicates on the Canadian theatre. Unlike the idea of a Canadian literature, which was based on a concern for national sentiment, the idea of a Canadian theatre emerged as the only viable alternative to American cultural imperialism.

It is true that Mair, like most Canadian dramatists, was alienated from the stage, although there is evidence, from internal scrutiny and external sources, that he hoped to see his plays produced. But we may also suppose that other factors as well determined the selection of the poetic

drama, and that this decision did not necessarily mean only that he intended to write for the closet alone. Had Mair been impelled by an urge to see his work on stage above all else, he could have elected a more conventional three-act form, and cast his subject as a typical melodrama, according to the theatrical tastes of the time. And although production would have been difficult to come by, it was not impossible; despite the American control of the circuits, there were a number of Canadian touring companies which might conceivably have been interested. Even while Mair was writing Tecumseh, the Marks Brothers were touring Canada with their home-made potboilers.

The nineteenth-century theatre was, as Tait has written "the most energetic [and] popular...that Canada has ever enjoyed".<sup>24</sup> But that fact may indicate more than the alienation of the Canadian dramatists; it may also suggest why they chose the forms they did. The late Victorian drama, especially in North America was hardly distinguished by its artistic achievement; the focus was still on the actor and spectacle. The popular melodrama was addressed to the broadest possible audience, and in the terms of the day, could be described as vulgar. It pandered to the tastes of its audiences--as most theatre does--and we must question whether writers like Mair had much sympathy for those tastes. Who comprised the audience? In Mair's ideal theatre, we might hypothesize, it would consist of intellectuals and men of quality who, like himself, saw themselves as the leaders and

moral instructors of the fledgling nation. But as D'Arcy McGee pointed out in 1867, just twenty years before the publication of Tecumseh, there were only approximately "six thousand educated men" in the Dominion, including clergy and medical doctors, and excluding school teachers.<sup>25</sup> These figures expanded enormously over the next generation, but there can be little doubt that the theatre of the day looked elsewhere for its audience; to tradesmen, farmers, workers, and their families. This was not Mair's audience, nor I think, did he intend it to be.

There existed in the late nineteenth-century an idea of high and low art, an educated and vulgar art. It was the difference between a Keats ode and a street ballad, a Cenci and a Shenandoah. This was in large part a class division. Today, we account for these differences between high and low --for they still exist--in terms of genre and archetypal mode, but the Victorian critic did not usually consider art in structural terms. The relation of form and theme concerned him only insofar as the one complemented the other, to create unity--a word which, as we shall see in our discussion of Tecumseh, held a more restricted meaning than it does today.

It cannot be forgotten that Mair had established himself as poet before he commenced writing his drama and that in choosing the poetic drama as his vehicle, he was following the respectful tradition of Tennyson, Wordsworth, and Shelley. But behind that tradition one can find a more complex reasoning at work. It was felt that only through the medium of poetry



could ideals be expressed to the fullest. If the poetic drama meant that the play would be consigned to the closet, so be it; there is little evidence that Mair was even interested in the theatre as anything other than a platform for his own ideas.

As a theatrical style, the poetic drama has never fully recouped its losses at the hands of the realistic melodrama, and although poetic tragedies were performed successfully throughout the nineteenth-century, they had lost their preeminence. In 1900, William Archer asked rhetorically whether it was "too much to say that, barring some tawdry pieces of theatrical claptrap, the whole blank-verse drama of the nineteenth-century is still-born, abortive?"<sup>26</sup>

His answer of course was that the question was perfectly sound, and that experiments in poetic drama were invariably hampered by a poor and confused understanding of the form. He found the idea of an historical episode dressed in pseudo-seventeenth-century language, expressing Victorian sentiments, to be absurd. He concluded that the poetic dramatist identified drama with artificiality.

Archer's was the standard realist critique of the poetic drama, and although his view is widely accepted today, it met with resistance in his own. In 1902, John Todhunter wrote that the poetic drama "is a form of imaginative expression quite unique for range of thought and for subtlety in the suggestion of delicate phases of emotion."<sup>27</sup> We will see how his prescription, which seems to describe the formal

pretensions of Tecumseh aptly, is an invitation to melodrama.

Todhunter further stated that,

...when we have to deal with a play which is also a poem, we enter a new region of dreamland, with a new atmosphere, a more idealized play of emotion and dramatic action, and a more idealized form of language with new difficulties to be mastered. The plane of the ideal is distinctly raised--it may be to an Olympian height--above the level of prose drama. 28

We have seen that Mair was interested above all in sentiment and that the choice of the poetic drama as a form was determined equally by the natural talent of the poet and a class bias in the concept of culture. As will be discussed, Mair chose the genre of heroic tragedy, for similarly ideological reasons. But whatever their aspirations, the choice of the poetic drama served to reinforce the already melodramatic structure in the scheme of his material. The reason for this can be seen between the lines of Todhunter's above statement, as well as in the very idea of national sentiment.

The poetic drama reflects sentiment through the compression of language and action--the very artificiality criticized by Archer. As Todhunter suggests, poetic diction is designed to reveal more of the intangible world of emotional quality than prose allows. This can be accounted for simply; the compression of resonances and images in poetry evokes an emotional response conditioned by linguistic precision. In the drama, the concept of an ideal sentiment, therefore, can only be reflected in the actions and speech of virtuous men, and by contrast, in the actions of evil men. The poetic dramatist depicts those rare actions and moments

of manifest sentiment by a process of isolation. Today, as heirs to the realist tradition, we work with a similar principle. Because we believe a character is revealed through dramatic action, we structure plays so that those incidents which reveal and develop that character are isolated and compounded. But Mair, like any dramatist who wants to celebrate an ideal of unflawed man, had to express sentiment in the very stature of his heroes; they were, after all, symbolic virtues of an ideological creed. Through the artifice of language, he was able to depict those qualities of the man which he admired, and by means of the artifice of action, he was able to threaten that virtue. It is notable here that much of our casual vocabulary of criticism is a legacy of Victorian romanticism; the linguistic idea of a dramatist depicting a character, and painting his scene on the broad canvas of the stage, implies a static certainty of dramatic values, which is essentially melodramatic.

When one recalls Bentley's phrase that melodrama is the naturalism of the dream life, Todhunter's assertion that the poetic drama takes us into a new region of dreamland suggests more than a romantic idealization. Archer found the incongruities of the poetic drama absurd, and at least one of Mair's critics frowned at the notion of Indian warriors speaking in iambic pentameter. But to Mair, the idea of an Elizabethan Indian chief was no more incongruous than that of an Elizabethan Julius Caesar. The poetic drama by its very convention lifted the action out of the merely historical.



Tecumseh is a conscious fantasy, not just of history as it was or should have been, but as it always has been, and always shall be. It would be unfair to say that Mair was a slave to convention. Rather, like Wilfred Campbell, he valued the Shakespearean tradition as a form of classical structure. (Later in his life, Mair was to reveal to an interviewer that Shakespeare and Walter Scott were his most prized authors as a child.)<sup>29</sup> For a writer wanting to prove the validity of a British Canadian literature, what better model was there than the one most respected as the summit of national genius? Using the pseudo-Shakespearean form, Mair could synthesize the artifice of the poetic drama, which allowed for the celebration of sentiment, and the lyricism of his own nature poetry, which expressed his romantic view of the Canadian landscape. Thus, the poetic drama was not just appropriate, but wholly integral to his theme; it allowed him to contain his action in an idealized unity.

Poetic diction and form raised the action above the level of the trivial and anecdotal. With its fantastic imagery and "dreamland" setting, the poetic drama would ideally immortalize its subjects in the convention of the ages, that is, in the respected traditions of English Literature. Tecumseh would stand forever beside Henry V.

Because it enlarges certain aspects of human experience, the poetic drama is often melodramatic. It enshrines fixed values, which are readily vitalized by means of a threat and it allows for an extreme range of probability. As has been

discussed, probability depends on an idea of decorum. In the popular melodrama, wild coincidence and accident could be decorous in the violence of the symbolic action. In the poetic drama, that probability took a different form. It was more than a theatrical affirmation of the melodramatic contest; it was an expression of sublime fate.

Any play which glorifies a polemical ideal in romantic terms is an act of depiction, an arrangement of values and threats, and is consequently melodramatic. But in Tecumseh the basis of the virtue is an idea of national unity and glory. The play attempts to instruct the reader as to the proper definition of that virtue, as well as championing it. Thus, in Tecumseh at least, probability is a function of morality. It is presented, not always successfully, as causal by nature, or rather, the dramatist attempted a causality. "There is no free will," Mair once declared, "destiny rules all".<sup>30</sup> Destiny in this case was on the side of the righteous, and the righteousness of Tecumseh was singular, in that it was also enshrined in a political structure. Even when the action is tragic, as it is meant to be in Tecumseh, right prevails, for the fallen hero himself becomes a symbol of moral grandeur and a promise of hope for the new Canada.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TECUMSEH

#### The Tragedy of Lefroy

I have stated that Charles Mair wanted to write a tragedy but produced a melodrama. His choice of material demanded a melodramatic treatment, and yet, there are strong, if undeveloped, tragic elements in the play. We may begin profitably with the premise that Mair tried to create a tragedy, but was defeated by contradictions in his scheme. His failure to create a tragedy is not due solely to his inadequacies as a dramatist. It owes as much to his complexity of theme, a complexity that he was unable to perfect.

Mair felt that the history of Tecumseh was inherently dramatic, and it appears that he chose the drama as his vehicle because the subject that interested him demanded that form.<sup>1</sup> His ambition was not to write a play so much as to write an appropriate treatment of Tecumseh's life (Shrive points out that Mair had been interested in Tecumseh since his twenties, as may be seen by the inclusion of his poem, "Prologue to Tecumseh" in his first volume of poetry, Dreamland and Other Poems).<sup>2</sup> In his preface to the play, Mair supplied a summary of that aspect which drew his interest to the story:

Both [Brock and Tecumseh] were men of transcen-



dant ability, to whose genius and self-sacrifice at the most critical period in her history is due the preservation of Canada to the Empire. At the outbreak of war, numbers of aliens domiciled in the Upper Province had contrived to spread dismay amongst the timid and wavering section of the community. It was at this juncture that the bold stroke of Brock and Tecumseh at Detroit electrified the people. Both heroes subsequently fell, but not until all Canada, inspired by their example, had resolved to fight it out. 3

Mair was struck by the image of Brock's friendship with Tecumseh, which has passed down into popular legend, and naturally enough the main focus of the play is to be found in Act IV, which deals with that alliance. Not surprisingly, Mair's description is really that of an heroic romance, rather than a tragedy, for the passing of the heroes creates the conditions of a new world, which they do not live to see. Because of this romanticism, Mair's tragic pretension, which is developed in Tecumseh's struggle for his people and Lefroy's search for natural order, is at an impasse. Neither Brock nor Tecumseh have any kind of tragic flaw, as it is commonly understood, that is, that trait of character or moral circumstance that engenders tragic action. In fact, their only weakness, and it is shared by both, is a surfeit of trust, for in the end, their dreams are set back by the deceit of others, whom they trusted unwisely. When they die, they do not fall from a great height; instead they ascend in apotheosis. This is a quality of romance, and indeed, Tecumseh might have attained the level of a complete romance (the dramatic form of which is often melodrama) had it not been for a curious inclusion on Mair's part.

Tecumseh is unusual in that it has three main protagonists, and two major antagonists, behind whom may be found a gallery of lesser figures aligned on the sides of good and evil. Tecumseh is obviously the main character; the action of the play takes place in his shadow, although he is absent for a good portion of it. His life is one of the major unities in the play, although it does not successfully integrate the action. But there are other unifying factors; Brock, who enters only for Act IV, but whose arrival as the champion of the romance is anticipated before that, and whose memory inspires the final act; and Lefroy, the romantic bohemian whose quest for the ideal counterpoints the main action. Opposing them are the Prophet, Tecumseh's megalomaniac brother who precipitates disaster through selfishness, and Harrison, the commander of the American forces, who feels a natural kinship with his enemies.

Tecumseh and Brock are virtuous men, heroes in the fullest sense of the word, and because their virtue is invulnerable to corruption or flaw, they are tragic only in the naive sense that they lose their lives. They are melodramatic characters, but before discussing the consequences of that statement, it would be best to examine the one character in the play who does undergo the semblance of a tragic experience. This is not to say that Mair successfully wrote a tragedy around Lefroy, but here he came closer than with any other character. Lefroy is the most complex character in the play, and in the end, he is undone by his own contra-

dictions. Although Lefroy should properly be regarded as the protagonist of a sub-plot, he provides the play with its structural unity, bringing together what might otherwise be two separate plays, one dealing with the Indian's defeat by Harrison at Tippecanoe, and the other with the British alliance against the invading Americans in 1812.

Three things serve to unite these events: Tecumseh's struggle to unite his people against the encroaching American republic, the heroic contest between the British Empire and republicanism in North America, and Lefroy's fruitless quest.

Why indeed is Lefroy in the play, and why should he be a major character? It is not only that Mair felt the need for a romantic sub-plot, although the conventions of Shakespearean classicism would seem to require one. Lefroy's quest, his love for Lena, is more than a reasonably well-integrated sub-plot; it is given too much prominence in the play, and Lefroy is too sharply contrasted to Tecumseh on the one hand and Brock on the other to be dismissed lightly. At first, it might appear that Mair had two plays in mind, a romantic epic about the War of 1812, encompassing the tragic history of Tecumseh, and a romantic tragedy about man's relation with nature. But Lefroy's significance to the main plot is more than coincidental.

Lefroy is a visionary given the chance to live his dream; he loses it for reasons he hardly recognizes, and exits in despair. His action is never fully tragic, but there is a tragic potential in it. We must admit Mair's



limitations as a dramatist here, for those elements which could be developed into tragedy in Lefroy's character are the least emphasized. It is no accident that in this sub-plot we see the greatest reliance on coincidence and exaggeration, that is, disproportionate decorum. For in Lefroy, Mair attempted to dramatize a contradiction which he himself may have felt deeply.

John Matthews has stated that "In Lefroy, Mair is saying farewell to a romantic dream whose attraction he can still feel, but which he has now outgrown".<sup>4</sup> There is some validity in this statement, but it does little to explain Lefroy's complexity. In a letter to Denison, written while he was still writing the play, Mair referred to Lefroy's occasional function as a chorus.<sup>5</sup> As a choral figure, Lefroy's function is restricted to long passages of natural description. But the idea of a chorus permits an understanding of Lefroy's relationship to the other characters. He is a student of Brock and Tecumseh, learning principles from both of them which in the end transform him from a romantic innocent into a man of action, at a great price. Lefroy, the perceptive artist, ennobles the two heroes by admiring them. The change he experiences as a result of knowing them is an index of their greatness.

In Act one, scene two, Lefroy is established as a romanticist who must always long for perfection, and in his search we find Mair's principal device for integrating the traditional poetic drama with Canadian sentiment. Lefroy

is both artist and naturalist; as he wanders through the forest, he cannot help but categorize the surrounding flora:

This is the arum which within its root  
holds life and death; and this the Prince's  
Pine, Fadeless as love and truth....

The precision with which he turns to nature as a metaphor and antithesis of human life is a habit of Lefroy's, although it is to be found amongst the other characters in lesser degree. He feels dwarfed by the greatness of the forest, but prefers it to the "sordid towns" of men, for

...here I am a part of Nature's self  
And not divorced from Her like men who plod  
the weary streets of care in search of gain.

Lefroy is an artist, we are told, and identifiable as such by his romantic sentiment. When in Act V, scene VI, Lefroy is engaged in hand to hand combat, his antagonist, an American officer accuses him of betraying his race. Lefroy responds with a romantic credo claiming that

My genius leans, like Nature, to all sides  
Can love them all at once, and live with all.

The officer's reply shows that Lefroy is recognizable not just as a sentimentalist, but as an artist:

So! So! you are a poet, painter, what? Well that  
is nothing; I must try and kill you.

By his sentiments alone, Lefroy is recognized as a creative artist; presumably his lofty idealism, with its mystic overtones, is considered the property of aesthetics. But nowhere do we see him in the act of creation, which leads us to suspect that he is an artist by stature rather than material effort. Mair calls him a "poet-artist", and

it is true that in Act 1 scene 11 he declaims a poem to an audience of trees. But even this is not extraordinary, for Iena does the same, and as for Lefroy's later description of the prairies to Brock, they are only marginally more poetic in form than the usual dialogue. Lefroy is an artist who does not create, but his creativity is evidenced by his superior perceptions. His poem to the trees, which he invites to listen with the words "Be audience, ye still untroubled stems", is both romantic credo and a paean to the Indians, whom he personifies as

A tameless soul--the sunburnt savage free--  
Free and untainted by the greed of gain:  
Great Nature's man content with Nature's food.

Mair, like others of his day, believed that racialism had a moral and scientific basis, and that the Indians could be stereotyped as innocent children of nature whose age of glory was at an end. Lefroy has come to meet Iena, and learns from her that Tecumseh has pronounced a ban on interracial marriage in an attempt to preserve the race. Lefroy argues to Tecumseh that the ban is unfair, "for if they should not marry, neither should they love". But although Tecumseh relents, and promises to respect their love, Mair has created an equivocal situation. He admits, through Iena, that the ban is a necessary step against the relentless American advance. But he is not advocating interracial marriage as a principle, as it may seem. Lefroy is an exceptional man, illustrative of the more exclusive principle of the compatibility of like spirits. Later in



his life, Mair would write that "in general, the Frenchman married the Indian and sank to the level of her tastes and inclinations. In general the Englishman married the Indian and raised her "to the level of his own." The issue is not whether the Indians should be left alone in peace, but who should have the right to influence their future in the new age. Tecumseh's dream that his people will live independent of the white is even at this point foredoomed, as his acceptance of Lefroy indicates.

In Act II, scene I, Lefroy has become Tecumseh's pupil; he is told that if he wants Iena, he must prove himself worthy as a man. Although Lefroy responds like the European he is, by maintaining that his promise is his bond, Tecumseh wants to see him in action. He must acquit himself with valour before he is accepted into the tribe. This is the first step in the erosion of Lefroy's ideal, although he does not recognize it. The prospect of joining the Indians seems to fulfill his dreams. And poet though he be, he is no pacifist. Even the prospect of war appeals to him.

In his role as Tecumseh's pupil, Lefroy attends the Council of Vincennes, to which Harrison has summoned the Indians to receive an American ultimatum. Tempers rise, and when Harrison tries to justify American expansionism because it provides a new world for the masses of the world's poor, Lefroy interrupts violently, condemning American hypocrisy. Here we see him as refugee from cynical realism--we are told

later that he is a former supporter of the revolution. He indicts the Americans as "rich thieves" and prophesies that

The time will come when that dread power--the poor--  
Whom in their greed and pride of wealth they spurn--  
Will rise on them and tear them from their seats'.....  
In all the freaming of the Universe  
There is no darker vision of despair.

The prospect of class war is bleak to Lefroy, as it was to many of Mair's generation, who thought of it in terms of the excesses of the French Revolution. Class war is not seen here as the consequence of the political economics of the United States, but as the disastrous result of the irresponsibility of a few plutocrats. Lefroy anticipates here that which he will learn from Brock; that the United States is unstable because it lacks the orderliness of the British Empire. Thus class war can only be avoided if every man is content with his station, an ideal possible only when the natural leaders fulfill their responsibilities to the nation. Lefroy's recognition of the fallacies of the American system is his first step towards an admission--if not an overt acceptance--of that fact. He will also learn, implicitly, that Tecumseh's planned federation of the tribes works on the same principle as the British Empire. By involving himself in what is an essentially political debate, Lefroy is unknowingly retreating from his ideal of utopian anarchism. In order to win Lena, he must involve himself in the very principles he fled to the forest to escape, and it is a sign of his ambivalence--and Mair's ambiguity--that he cannot recognize this.

In Act III, scene II, Lefroy suffers a reversal. He and Tecumseh have travelled to the western prairies to recruit the distant tribes into the federation. The Indian village of Tippecanoe is left in the charge of the Prophet, who with characteristic spite, gives Iena to Tarhay, a subordinate chief. Iena's dilemma is contrasted to that of the Indians as a whole; the formal sequence of Act III begins with alternating scenes of Harrison in council with his officers as they prepare to attack Tippecanoe, and Iena's attempts to defy the Prophet. This is a naive use of montage to create suspense and emphasize the growing threat while Tecumseh and Lefroy are offstage. Iena's plight may diminish the threat to the Indian camp by trivializing it, but it is necessary that both Tecumseh and Lefroy are in danger of losing their most valued dreams in their absence. Lefroy's fate has become identified with Tecumseh's. Iena promises to sacrifice herself to Tarhay if the Prophet will call off the attack. Just as Tarhay accepts this condition, the Prophet retaliates with his mystical authorities and frightens Tarhay into submission:

.....Tarhay-attend!  
 I can see dreadful visions in the air;  
 I can dream awful dreams of life and fate;  
 I can bring darkness on the heavy earth;  
 I can fetch shadows from our father's graves;  
 And spectres from the sepulchres of hell.  
 Who dares dispute with me disputes with death!

The Prophet's "mummery", as Mair labels it in his footnotes, has been exploited by Tecumseh in order to extend his authority, and has his implicit sanction, although he is unaware of the malevolent ends to which it is directed.



It is because of this authority, which triumphs even over Iena's purity of heart, that the Prophet is able to precipitate the disaster at Tippecanoe.

Tecumseh arrives from his journey only to find the smouldering ruins of the Indian town. But the defeat, while ruining his dream for the moment, strengthens his resolve. As the Prophet slinks off in disgrace, Tecumseh vows to join the British in the imminent war:

But why despair? All is not lost. The English  
are our friends.  
My spirit rises.....

Tecumseh loses his town, and Lefroy has lost Iena. In order to escape marrying Tarhay, she has fled into the wilderness, and to Lefroy's mind, certain death.

At the end of Act III, the action between Tecumseh and the Prophet is completed, and were it not for Iena's absence and Tecumseh's somewhat arbitrary resolve to join with the British, the play would be finished. But Mair has not yet begun to explore his real theme, 'that of the spiritual legacy of the Indians as it is passed on to Canada. In this sense, the first three acts are expository; they create a situation so desperate for Tecumseh that his final stand at Moravian Town will hold the significance of a *Götterdämmerung*. The defeat at Tippecanoe has given him a material reason to join with the British, which will grow into a moral imperative when he meets Brock. But this scheme can only be reckoned a posteriori; in the meantime, it is Lefroy who, despite his minor role in the subsequent events provides the unity of dramatic as opposed to thematic-action.

The action shifts abruptly at the beginning of Act IV, when the Chorus makes the first of two incongruous appearances to announce the declaration of war in 1812. Nothing is seen of Tecumseh and Lefroy until scene V, although we know that Brock has met Tecumseh and formed a firm alliance. Tecumseh is on the way to realizing his dream, but Lefroy must still find Iena. When Elliot mentions Lefroy's "bootless" quest for Iena in passing, Brock recognizes the name as that of a childhood friend, and although we have presumed until now that Lefroy is either a Frenchman or a Québécois, we learn that like Brock, he is a Guernseyman. Brock recalls him with fondness:

He had in youth,  
All goods belonging to the human heart,  
But fell away to Revolution's side--  
Impulsive e'er and o'er prompt to see  
In kings but tyrants, and in laws but chains.

Brock is Lefroy's second teacher, and the scene leads to the confrontation that is the core of this attempted tragedy. From Tecumseh, Lefroy has learned manliness and justice; from Brock he learns the necessity of social responsibility. If he can learn well from both of them, he will synthesize their respective qualities and emerge as Mair's prototypical Canadian. It is not to be, however, for his fate is sealed by "Revolution's calculating sons". It is not enough that Lefroy learns the need for secular responsibility; he must fully experience the effects of its abuse. Iena's death in Act V is Lefroy's final lesson in the inequities of human conduct and the need for moral guardianship such as the Empire

represents. His early enchantment with revolution will be paid in full with a personal loss.

The circumstances of Brock's meeting with Lefroy are curious, and indicate Mair's strengths as well as his weaknesses as a dramatist. The scene is the bank of the Detroit River, across from the American fort, on the eve of the attack; Brock and his staff are quartered in Colonel Baby's nearby mansion. A procession of characters enters into the moonlight to muse on the fortunes of war that have transformed this sylvan scene into an apprehension of war. The first, Captain Robinson of the Canadian militia, serves as a chorus, extolling the peacefulness of the scene, and invoking a future when "the strong and generous youths of Canada" will make pilgrimage to Baby's mansion:

So shall they profit, drinking of the past  
And, drinking loyally, enlarge the faith  
Which love of country breeds in noble minds.

Mair was of course speaking to his own generation, some of whom had heard first-hand reminiscences of the war. Indeed, while in Windsor writing the play, Mair cultivated the friendship of Baby's son, and made a trip to the old mansion, where he "could almost see the shades of Brock and Tecumseh flitting through the rooms..."<sup>6</sup>

As Robinson exits, Iena enters in distress, having eaten of the poisonous wild carrot. She collapses behind a shrubbery, unaware of her whereabouts. No sooner has she done so, when Brock enters with Lefroy. They are arguing their respective philosophies; Lefroy is still a confirmed



romantic, unaware that fulfilment lies as close as the nearest bush. Brock argues for tradition, saying that "My father's God is wise enough for me." As always, Brock is exemplary, a Tory humanist who, despite the burden of his command, still finds time to instruct the friend of his youth. Lefroy predicts a romantic era to come, claiming that long after war and ignorance have been banished from the world only "one tyrant will remain," namely, gold.

Him must the earth destroy, ere man can rise,  
Rightly self-made, to his high destiny,  
Purged of his grossest faults; humane and kind;  
Co-equal with his fellows, and as free.

For Lefroy, that dream will never be realized; indeed, it is the American lust for wealth that kills Iena, and he will learn that so long as the world is imperfect, one's duty is to help impose order upon it. Brock has the last word, although he politely offers to drop "this bootless argument." He tells Lefroy that his ideas are dangerous, "Let loose, could wreck the world". Their danger is not inherent, but in practice, or rather malpractice. This is an idealized and tolerant Brock, not at all like the military governor who raged at the provincial assembly when it refused to suspend the Habeus Corpus Act at his demand. His lecture to Lefroy on the need for monarchy stands as a creed for Mair himself. The war is more than a military engagement; it is a struggle to establish principles by which a nation can grow.

The kingly function is the soul of state,  
The crown the emblem of authority,  
And loyalty the symbol of all faith,  
Omitting these, man's government decays--  
His family falls into revolt and ruin.

It may be noted here that Mair relies on the conceit of a family more than once. Not only is the Empire seen as an extended family, with the king as patriarch, but the principles of loyalty and blood which hold a family in bond are applied to nations. Thus, the American war against Britain is unnatural because it is parricidal; even Tecumseh realizes this when in Act V he calls the two countries "son and father".

This exchange of platitudes between two Guernseymen in the Upper Canadian bush is the centre of Tecumseh, insofar as one may be isolated. Lefroy's idealism is admirable, but misplaced, as he will soon learn. But Mair is not simply trying to discount idealism, nor is he faulting Lefroy. Rather, he is reinforcing Brock's argument by pitting it against an effective opponent. He is suggesting that Lefroy's romanticism is essentially religious, and although it is precious, can only be dealt with in secular terms. The very conflict in the play is a struggle between two forms of secular idealism: the republicanism of the United States, which is only as effective as its lowest common denominator, and the constitutional monarchy of the Empire, which derives moral strength from a symbolic hierarchy of values. Lefroy must choose, even if the tide of events has prepared his choice. He began by emulating the Indians, hoping thus to escape the pressures of civilized life. But even Tecumseh is a politician, first by uniting the tribes, and then by joining with Brock. Only by accepting the realities of the material world, Mair suggests, can one hope to establish the conditions that will make Lefroy's

idealism fruitful.

Brock exits, after having Lefroy describe in detail his trip to the prairies with Tecumseh. These passages are of no intrinsic relevance to the play, but they give Mair the opportunity to indulge in his talents as a lyric poet and his love for the Canadian west. His description of a herd of bison is one of the most-quoted passages of the play, and leads to one of the few descriptions of Tecumseh as a man of action. Lefroy tells of Tecumseh's agility in the buffalo hunt, leading Brock to pronounce that which the audience already knows: "This warrior's fabric is of perfect parts! "

As Brock takes his leave, Lefroy mourns for Iena, having finally accepted her death as a certainty. But even as he does so, Iena begins to revive behind the shrubbery:

LEFROY: Dead in the forest wild--earth cannot claim  
Aught but her own from thee. Sleep on!  
Sleep on!

IENA: (Reviving) What place is this?

LEFROY: Who's there? What voice is that?

IENA: Where am I now?

LEFROY: I'll follow up that sound! A desperate  
hope now ventures in my heart!

What appears as an outrageous coincidence was meant by Mair to be the working of a sublime fate, an inevitable step in Lefroy's and Iena's tragic destiny. Doubtless, Mair supposed their meeting to be no more implausible than the final act of Romeo and Juliet, and the fact that they should find each other on the very spot where Lefroy received instruc-



tion from Brock heightens the spiritual value of the Upper Canadian border. For the moment, the lovers have found happiness, but it cannot last. The Prophet chances upon them and walks by, scowling. Although he himself is no longer dangerous--in fact, this is his last appearance in the play--he signifies threats to come. Now that they are together again after their ordeal, Iena will not let Lefroy out of her sight; she will follow him into battle, and save his life at the cost of her own.

But before this final catastrophe, Lefroy experiences one final revelation. In Act IV, scene VIII, he attends Brock and Tecumseh at the fall of Detroit, and witnesses the intensity of their friendship. Tecumseh has given to a valiant subordinate a sash previously given to him by Brock. Moved by this gesture, Brock gives him his pistols. Lefroy exclaims, "This is a noble friendship", and when Brock asks him of his opinion of war now, answers

If this war shield  
Nature's most intimate and injured men,  
I shall revoke my words and call it blest.

Lefroy is foreshadowing their deaths by referring to the possibility, but he is also admitting that it was the war that made this friendship possible. His attitude towards war is still cautious, as may be seen by the qualified answer he gives to Brock, but he is beginning to realize that war is a matter of principle, and that an honourable war can bring to the surface man's nobility. In the end, the deaths of those he admires and loves, Brock, Tecumseh, and Iena, do not reaffirm

his original utopian ideals of pacifism, but instead plunge him into cynical disillusionment. His preoccupation with his own being, as opposed to his country, was challenged by his contact with these apostles of secular justice, yet he lacks the ultimate maturity to benefit from their examples. He sees their deaths, particularly Iena's, as a betrayal of fate, and is left a man without a centre.

After the fall of Detroit, Lefroy does not re-enter Until Act V, scene VI,\* at which point the catastrophe is imminent. Proctor has thrown victory to the wind because of his cowardice; Brock is dead; and only Tecumseh and the militia are prepared to withstand Harrison's advance.

In Act V, scene III, when Lefroy takes his leave of Iena, she hints that this will be their last meeting before the end:

Farewell, and we shall meet again--here? where?  
Yes, yes, I know--there's something tells me  
where. Farewell!

She tells her friends, who believe that "forest maids should sing as lightly as our forest leaves", and cannot understand her inexplicable melancholy, that "Love's Spirit" has warned her in dream to shield Lefroy. Mair is attempting here to create a tragic atmosphere in order to justify the sensational pathos of Iena's death by making it inevitable.

But although Iena's death is appropriate to Mair's theme it is not inherently necessary to the action of the play. As we have seen, it is necessary that Lefroy realize the naivety of his ideals, but there is no force in the play that demands Iena's death as the catalyst for this revelation. It may be

argued that Iena personifies Lefroy's ideals, and so her death represents the death of his vision. This is valid, but again, it is not sustained in what Aristotle called the fable, the dramatic action proper. Mair attempts to solve this problem by reference to Iena's spiritual insight; she is portrayed as a "forest maid" who apprehends impending disaster. But even this serves a melodramatic purpose, for Iena's fate, rather than inspiring Lefroy to a more profound understanding of his self and the world through which he moves, merely demonstrates the horrors of war, and attests to the monstrosity of the American republic. Iena dies by accident, even though she sacrifices her life deliberately to save her lover. Her death is accidental because the very circumstances which have placed her behind the tree before which Lefroy is fighting for his life have evolved by chance. Thematically, we can identify a certain kind of causality, for in Mair's scheme it is inevitable that this particular accident should occur in this place. But that causality is a matter of conclusion rather than character action. Similarly, in Act IV, scene VI, when Lefroy discovers Iena behind the bush on the riverbank by chance, the chance is prefigured by Mair's need to reunite the two lovers, but it has not concrete basis in the action of the play. Iena has wandered off after the battle of Tippecanoe, but there is no suggestion in the text that she intended Sandwich as her destination and no reference to the events that brought her there. This is the melodramatic use of coincidence, which leaves details unsaid so long as a sense of fitness is fulfilled.<sup>7</sup>



Iena's death leaves Lefroy in empty despair. He is incapable of seeing that noble sacrifice and heroism can in the end excuse personal loss; he curses "dull fate" and carries her off, saying

My object's gone, and I am but a shell  
A husk, and empty case, or anything  
That may be kicked about the world.

Brock's death has inspired his followers to greater courage; Tecumseh's will leave an heroic legacy for future generations. But no such benefit accrues from Iena's death. Lefroy can only function in relation to a personification of his ideals; despite his ethereal vocabulary, he cannot appreciate those ideals in the abstract alone. But, in accord with the convention of tragedy, Lefroy's example benefits others. The American officer, who has witnessed Iena's death is impressed by the purity of Lefroy's love and declares, "I have seen what gives me sight." True to the melodramatic principle that the antagonist is the measure of the hero, this is an officer of the Harrison mould. He realizes now that there is little honour in his cause.

The tide of battle rolls  
Back, and our people win, as win they must;  
But, now, methinks, I'll strive with different heart.

So ends the tragedy of Lefroy and Iena. By accepting the challenge to his ideals represented by Brock and Tecumseh Lefroy has inadvertently brought about the one thing that will destroy his spirit. He is blameless; his tragedy lies in his maladjustment and the naive belief that man can at once escape the responsibilities of the world and involve himself in them.

But in defeat, he affirms the ideal in which he has always believed. The fact that he survives however, leaves him a pathetic figure, rather than tragic. Unlike Oedipus, whose tragedy leaves him alive but stripped of his life, ready to encounter his destiny on some unknown road, Lefroy will never come to understand his fate.

Central as it is to the unity of the play, Lefroy's sub-plot is peripheral to the main action, which concentrates on two major events: Tecumseh's struggle to unite the tribes, and his joint effort with Brock to save Upper Canada. In his treatment of these, Mair found himself relying on a melodramatic format, although in Act V he tries to redefine the story of Tecumseh as a tragedy. The melodrama was made necessary by his need to express an heroic ideal in the characters of Brock and Tecumseh, and even though Tecumseh's death spells the end of the Indian nation, it is a promise of a new age to come.

Because Mair was unable to resolve the contradiction in his use of historical fact in Tecumseh, a condition analyzed in Chapter four, he relied on Lefroy to provide the structural unity in the play. The major plot is unified through theme and chronology, but Mair could not find a way to express that theme in a dramatic character or preeminent event. Such an approach requires a dialectical view of history, while Mair preferred to think of it as the static embodiment of fixed principles.

In this sense, Lefroy is the actual protagonist of Tecumseh, for he undergoes the greatest change, and his is the

real catastrophe. That this leaves so much of the play unexplained enables one to isolate the major weaknesses of it. Mair obviously intended Tecumseh as his protagonist--and in fact, he is the protagonist of Act V--but like Brock, he is a static figure. As will be seen, he performs three major dramatic actions: he accepts and instructs Lefroy; challenges Harrison at Vincennes; and makes an heroic last stand at Moravian Town. Thematically, these actions are unified by his fight for the survival of his people, but dramatically, they are unified only by his chronological character. It may be argued that Tecumseh's struggle for his people impells him throughout the play, and may thus be considered a dramatic spine. But a close examination will reveal that in fact this concern is a superimposed motif joining a series of struggles against melodramatic villains.

### The Villains

Tecumseh is a conventional representation of virtue, best understood not by his actions, but by the forces which act upon him. Just as Lefroy's tragic action illuminates something about Tecumseh and his cause, so can we define more of him by examining the nature of his enemies, the Prophet and the Americans. Of these, the Americans are the principle threat, and it is in his common fight with Brock against them that Tecumseh learns, although he will later renounce this knowledge, that his enemy is not white civilization, but a specific kind of civilization.



Although American expansionism, as a representation of anarchy, is the major threat in the play, Mair avoided a simple reduction of all Americans to the level of evil villainy. In fact, there are three types of American: the officer caste as represented by Harrison; the common man, as represented by the militiamen Bloat, Slaugh, Gerkin and Twang; and the Yankee settlers of Upper Canada who advance the American cause through their sedition. Despite Harrison's victory in Act V, all are defeated in their own fashion.

Harrison is the principal antagonist, for not only is he the leader of the American forces, but the noblest among them. In his footnote description of the American general, Mair calls him a "man of honour and generous nature," who "mediated nothing but kind and just treatment of the native races," and was compelled to "wink at aggression and injustice too often veiled under the specious name of progress". Harrison is portrayed as a reluctant villain who knows the baseness of his cause even while he performs his duty as a gentleman and patriot. He is a professional officer, honour-bound by his allegiance to a country engaged in unjust policies. As a natural aristocrat, he is a worthy opponent to Tecumseh. It is not too much to assume that this favourable depiction is as much a result of Mair's sympathy with his class as it is historical fact. Harrison is a determined and sometimes ruthless enemy, but he is a Southern aristocrat, one of the "old stock" of the revolution who fought for ideals rather than material gain.

It may be argued that Harrison is in fact a tragic fig-

ure, caught in a conflict between his conscience and his allegiances, and that this would in effect make him a compromised hero, rather than a reluctant villain. There is a contradiction here, between the sympathetic villain, such as Harrison represents, and the pathological villain such as the Prophet. Compared to the Prophet and Proctor, Harrison cannot be considered a melodramatic villain; clearly he sides with good, as Mair attempts to demonstrate in the confused handling of the Battle of Tippecanoe. Yet Harrison is best considered as a villain because of his role as the principle antagonist. It is a measure of Mair's confusion with genres that the principle antagonist in the play should exert less force than those who are technically lesser villains, Proctor and the Prophet, who are responsible for the catastrophes. Normally, we should not expect to have to make this distinction.

In the heroic tragedy Mair intended, Harrison is the major antagonist; in the melodrama he actually wrote, he is of less consequence than Proctor and the Prophet. Extending this line of thought, we should have to conclude that Harrison is an ornament of convention, and in fact, does not belong in the play. His significance lies in his role as leader of the Americans, and as a measure of the heroes. In that sense, his function is almost wholly representational.

Harrison is introduced as a contradictory figure. As the agent of his government, he has asked Tecumseh to council at Vincennes. Tecumseh is naturally suspicious; he assumes that the Americans will violate their treaties, just as he knows

the British will uphold theirs. This anticipated betrayal is merely another in a catalogue of grievances Tecumseh recites to his warriors:

And now we're asked to Council at Vincennes;  
To bend to lawless ravage of our lands,  
To treacherous bargains, contracts false, wherein  
One side is bound, the other free as air;

Tecumseh plans to temporize, in order to complete his job of uniting the tribes. He leaves his brother, the Prophet, in charge of the camp, with the injunction,

Pluck not our enterprise while it is green,  
And breed no quarrel here until I return.

When, in Act 11, scene 111, Harrison receives Tecumseh at Vincennes he knows, but cannot accept the Indian demand that all lands be common to all tribes. But he is not the deceiver Tecumseh conceives him to be. Although he recognizes the Indian's right, he must refuse it on two grounds. He believes in an ideal of progress based on the acquisition of property, and he must uphold the orders of his government. Still he is not comfortable with his task:

Could I but strain  
My charge this chief might be my trusty friend.  
Yet I am but my nation's servitor.  
Gold is the king who overrides the right,  
And turns our people from their simple ways  
And fair ideals of their father's lives.

Reluctant he may be, but Harrison is still a formidable enemy. At the Council of Vincennes, Tecumseh rejects the demand that he abide by the treaties signed by earlier chiefs in the pay of the Americans. Harrison fails in his object at the Council, but he emerges as an equal to Tecumseh.



After Lefroy's outburst on the dangers of class war, Tecumseh flies into a violent rage and draws his hatchet. Harrison maintains his calm; refusing to be provoked into a disastrous battle, he orders his men to hold their fire. His rational temper, and wisdom, is a quality he shares with Brock, and it is only the fortunes of war that make them enemies. He attempts to reason with Tecumseh, stressing legality when the Indian demands justice, and delivers a well-balanced case for the Americans. Tecumseh sneers at this rationalism:

It is a thief which steals away our lands.  
Your reason is our deadly foe, and writes  
The jeering epitaphs for our graves.  
It is the lying maker of your books  
Wherein our people's vengeance is set down,  
But not a word of crimes which led to it.

There is no compromise for this conflict, which pits European reason against the Indians' intuitive sense of natural justice. To Mair's mind, the Indians lived by the natural laws yearned for by Lefroy, and thus could only perceive European reason as a perversion: Harrison is reduced to making threats of force, reminding Tecumseh of the military power he can deploy against the Indians. But even this does not deter Tecumseh, who scorns the American militia as

Well drilled in fraud and disciplined in crime;  
But in aught else as honour, justice, truth,  
A rabble and a base disordered herd.

No matter how well-intentioned Harrison may be, Tecumseh will not let him forget that he is the servant of an unjust government. Harrison cannot resolve this dilemma, for he is unable to enforce his own principles on his army and country. He is a man wronged by his government and wrongly

accused by Tecumseh as a deceiver. His manner of speaking itself indicates his lofty ideals; like Brock and Tecumseh, he makes use of metaphors and similes drawn from nature (although not so much as Lefroy). He is temperate, treating his subordinates and enemies with courtesy and listening to his Councillors with respect. He loses his temper only once; when Bloat, Slaugh and Twang interrupt the Council of Vincennes with their ignorant bigotry, he denounces them as fools.

Act 111 reveals another aspect of Harrison. Up to this point, he has been seen as a politician and diplomat; now he enters as a man of action and patriot. To his councillors he expresses his dismay at the government's recent deferment of war with England. Unlike most of his countrymen, who favour war because of their greed, Harrison sees it as a matter of honour. In fact, Mair implicitly suggests, the Americans cannot win the coming war because they are divided in purpose, to the extent that New England, which values its trade links with Britain, is opposed to war altogether. The war is not an expression of a national will, as it is for the Canadians, but, to paraphrase Clausewitz, a continuation of politics by other means. Harrison is not interested in conquest; he wants to rectify what he sees as a shameful policy towards British raids on American naval shipping;

Great God! I am amazed at such supiness.  
Our trade prohibited, our men impressed,  
Our flag insulted .....  
Such tame submission yokes not with my spirit.  
And sends my southern blood into my cheeks....

He reacts with anger to a presidential order to avoid

war with the Indians, unless it be in self-defense. He sees the prospect of a frontier victory as desirable, for it could excite war fever against Britain. As he is not allowed to attack the Indians, his plan is simple: he will provoke them into attacking him. The plan reveals him as a pragmatist. When one of his advisors asks him how he can justify what is plainly a breach of instructions, he replies in a manner Napoleon might have admired:

If we succeed we need not fear the breach--  
In the same space we live and heal the wound.

The battle of Tippecanoe shows Harrison to be a brilliant and ruthless general. In Act III, scene III, he has advanced upon the Prophet's town for ostensible peaceful purposes, and his officers have set up camp on ground recommended by the Indian chiefs. They consider it a secure position, on a high plateau, until Harrison arrives and points out its strategic weaknesses, which will allow the Indians easy cover as they approach. For Harrison knows full well that with Tecumseh away, the Prophet will attack. But although an Indian attack is desirable, it is not necessary, for events have moved so quickly that he is prepared to initiate an attack himself. As he surveys the plateau, Harrison comments

These noble oaks,  
the streamlet to our ear,  
This rank wild grass-wood, water, and soft beds!  
The soldier's luxuries are here together.

Like the Indian, the soldier is an essentially romantic figure, most comfortable away from the artificial trappings of European civilization. The soldier lives close to nature



and encounters death daily, thus, like the Indian he is more appreciative of nature's order. His life is elemental, a continuous effort founded on principle. This kind of soldier however, is rare in Harrison's army; even his staff cannot evaluate the terrain with any degree of competence. This is a theme that will recur in the War of 1812: the American army is undisciplined, and can only win when led brilliantly as at Tippecanoe, or when fighting a notably inferior force, as at Moravian Town.

After the battle is won, as much by the Prophet's false promises of invincibility to his warriors as by American skill, Harrison orders the town sacked of foodstuffs and then razed. The women and children flee to the forests. Harrison is not simply fighting a battle, he is engaged in total war. Once more his generous spirit is tempered by pragmatism.

After Tippecanoe, Harrison does not re-enter until Act V, scene IV, when he prepares to defeat Proctor's forces after having re-taken command upon Hull's surrender of Detroit. Brock is dead, and Proctor, his successor as commander of the British forces, lacks the will to fight. Harrison finds Proctor's headquarters deserted, and vows to pursue the British, whom he holds responsible for the massacre of American prisoners, guarded by what Mair in his footnotes calls "loose and disorderly" Indians. An American officer remarks that it is strange that Tecumseh should "hug" Proctor's "flying fortunes" and regrets that a separate truce could not be negotiated with the Indians. Harrison recognizes that peace with Tecumseh is

impossible, for

There is no peace on earth  
For him, save in it. We are who we are;  
And if some miracle will work a change  
In use, then shall we find him, as we would,  
Contented but with peace.

Even as he approaches victory, Harrison admits the injustice of his cause. But the melodramatic scheme of the play requires that he quell this internal disturbance; he cannot allow it to influence him. His frank self-evaluation, however, promises hope for the future, for the first step towards changing one's nature--insofar as it is possible--is a recognition of one's faults.

Harrison does not gloat over his victory at Moravian Town, when he makes his final entrance at the end of the play. He provides the final eulogy for Tecumseh, and promises to Colonel Baby that he will protect the Indians, for "right feeling tends this way." He realizes that his fallen adversary was a better man than he. But there is little pride in the victory:

Sleep well, Tecumseh, in thy unknown grave,  
Thou mighty savage, resolute and brave!  
Thou, master and strong spirit of the woods,  
Unsheltered traveller in sad solitudes,  
Yearner o'er Wyandot and Cherokee,  
Couldst tell us what hath been and shall be!

Only after the battle does Harrison realize what Tecumseh already knew: that the American victory spells the end of a nation and an idea, and that Tecumseh's death was the fall of an age.

These final words are more than chivalrous praises

from an antebellum Southern aristocrat; they are a confirmation of Harrison's place in the scheme of the play. When criticized by Denison for portraying Harrison in such favourable terms, Mair retorted that, "I am sorry he was not a beast, but I cannot falsify history for the sake of dramatic effect...He was an upright man of kind disposition and considerable ability." But we cannot accept Mair's own words as reason for a positive Harrison--indeed, those same words might apply to Iago. Mair conceived of character in terms of moral stature, but even this would allow a sympathetic Harrison to be shown in a villainous light. The concept of a character whose actions are formed by contradictions was beyond Mair's ability--or so we might conclude--and schematic interest. The fact that this Harrison is a sympathetic man is attributable more to the logic of the play, confused as it is than to Mair's personal regard for the man.

But Harrison, sympathetic as he is, represents--although he does not wholly stand for--the threat of the United States. His villainy is idealistic in quality, not motivated by base desires. The villain in melodrama is symbolic of a threat to the community, even when that symbolism is obscure or unintentional. In this case, because of the polemical nature of the play, the threat is clear and deliberate, and the choice of a sympathetic villain reinforces the inevitable victory for the side of righteousness. The more elevated the antagonist's character, the greater is the hero's; they reflect each other. It would demean Tecumseh's character to be defeated by a scoun-



drel. His heroic stature requires heroic opposition to vitalize it.

Harrison represents a lack of moral unity in the United States. At the close of the play, it would appear that villainy is triumphant, and the question will arise of how can one reconcile this closing balance with the melodramatic victory of good. Harrison's relationship to the men under his command and the country he serves enables us to qualify that problem at this point. Harrison is the conqueror, and his victory is an American victory. But that is not to say that the Americans as a collectivity are triumphant at the finish of the play. In fact, they are falling apart from within. The characters of the frontiersmen, as well as the behaviour of the Americans at the fall of Detroit, make it clear that the American forces lack the very thing that guarantees British victory: moral unity, or in Mair's terms, a true national sentiment. The United States are divided on the issue of the war, and the American people are a "base disordered herd", whose anarchic tendencies are checked only by a collective lust for wealth. In a war of absolutes, they win only a qualified victory in the end, as Harrison well knows.

Harrison represents not just the United States, but the ideals upon which the country was built, and which have in his lifetime been superseded by materialism. In the ideological action of the play, which centres on Mair's attempt to create a Canadian mythos, Harrison promises hope for the future. His subordinates personify that aspect of America which Canada

has always distrusted, but he himself stands for the America that is Canada's first cousin. Tecumseh is not simply an anti-American play, as Tait seems to suggest. Rather, it is critical of certain aspects of American political culture. The very idea of the play involves anti-American prejudice, but it is tempered with an admission of common attitudes and traits that Canadians will recognize and admire.

This is not to suggest that Mair succeeded in developing a complex critique of the United States. Harrison represents an unformed contradiction never fully examined in the play, but present in the formulation of it. Dramatically there are two Harrisons: the ruthless enemy general who brings catastrophe upon the side of virtue, and the noble gentleman who regrets the defeat of his enemy. The reason that this contradiction is never fully developed in the play extends beyond Mair's own ambivalence regarding the United States. Harrison does not differentiate between the two wars he is fighting, against the British on the one hand and the Indians on the other. His character lacks internal unity because he is the product of Mair's contradiction in the scheme of the play, which will be examined in the following chapter.

Harrison is only the first amongst a gallery of antagonists, but when compared with the others, we can conclude that his nobility derives from the fact that he is of the same class as Brock and Tecumseh. They are all political leaders, and generals in the field, and they fight a war of principle and honour. Though they rarely meet in the play, they are rem-

iniscent of the medieval champions who sought personal combat according to a strict code of chivalry, while at their feet, pawns were slaughtered. The war in Tecumseh is one of national will, designed to inspire a national sentiment, and as such, it cannot be reduced totally to a political engagement. For Harrison and Brock, the war is one of Manifest Destiny against Empire, which can only be described, in the jargon of the nineteenth-century, as "world-historical." The rest of the villains, the Prophet, Proctor, and the lesser Americans, serve to remind us that the causes of war are not always so romantic, and that its reversals are not always reversals of principle.

Throughout the play, Harrison echoes Lefroy and Techumseh in their continual denunciation of material greed, which threatens to engulf the world. In the American camp, we see that this has already created a deep division.<sup>8</sup>

Mair took care to identify Harrison as a Southerner, and to contrast his genteel code of honour with the vulgar and destructive greed of Bloat and his friends, who by their speech and theatrical type, are easily recognized as Northern Yankees. This conflict between two Americas, although not fully expressed in the play, casts a shadow over the final American victory.

Tecumseh may suffer from a confused dramatic unity, but it has a thematic complexity, for Mair has contained a number of conflicting pressures within a melodramatic structure. On the side of virtue, we find the struggle of the Indian to preserve



their homelands; the British struggle to preserve the Empire; and the Canadians' fight to preserve their freedom; and with Lefroy, an attempt to realize the pure aspirations of art. On the side of evil, we find greed, indifference (this from the Yankee settlers in Canada), doomed chivalry, and moral corruption. In the end, it is the idea of a race-national struggle that makes these conflicts sensible.

If Harrison is an idealist whose sense of honour compels him to support a dishonourable cause, the low characters of Bloat, Slaugh, Twang and Gerkin are members of the new class of materialists for whom honour has no meaning. They are the disqualifying flaws which disprove an otherwise noble experiment in democracy. They enter only twice, in Act II, scene II, and in attendance to Harrison at the Council of Vincennes, from which they depart at the first hint of violence. Presumably, Mair dropped them after that point because they had served their purpose, which was illustrative rather than dramatic. Perhaps too he was wary of excesses, both political and literary.

These characters are, as Shrive has pointed out, Mair's attempt to create low clowns of the Shakespearean style, but they have no independent action.<sup>9</sup> They exist as a mockery of Harrison's ideals, describing themselves as gentlemen, and claiming high rank. Bloat, we are told, is a major, Slaugh a general, and Twang a "Jedge". Clearly, they owe their positions to the crude democracy of the frontier, although they are first cousin to the corrupt ward bosses and elected officials of the late nineteenth-century American melodrama. They are not

only unruly, but insubordinate, as American-style democracy allows them to question the action of their leaders. They recognize Harrison's inherent nobility, and resent it. Scorning Harrison's policy of appeasement with the Indians prior to the refusal of terms at Vincennes, Slauch says,

Wall, I reckon our Guvner's kind's about played out. They call themselves the old stock--the clean pea--the rale gentlemen o' the Revolooshun. But, gentelmen, ain't we the Revolooshun? Jest wait till the live citizens o' these United States and Territories gits a chance, and we'll show them gentry what a free people, with our institqoshuns, kin do. There'll be no more talk o' skoolin for Injuns, you bet!.....

These are the only prose passages in the play. By refusing to let Bloat and friends speak in blank verse, Mair was doing more than abiding by what seemed to be the conventions of the poetic drama, which require that diction reflect sentiment. He wanted to parody American frontier dialect, which was held to reflect ignorance and stupidity. In doing this, Mair was catering to the traditional Canadian prejudice which sees American English as a corruption of the language.

This conversation is lively, for the frontiersmen are engaged in their favourite pastime: criticizing their superiors and swapping accounts of atrocities against the Indians. One of their favourite tales is that of "Kernel Crawford--who knew good sile when he sot his eyes on it--". An account of Crawford's atrocities meets with the approval of the frontiersmen, who are intolerant of any group that refuses to conform to their standards, whether that group be Indians, "gentry" or even Shakers. And yet, these characters perform a more

subtle function in the play by absolving Harrison of any responsibility for American atrocities. Mair makes it clear that these are the men, along with "Kernel Crawford", who are responsible for genocide. Harrison, we have seen, enlarges Tecumseh because of a principle of identification; these men enlarge Harrison because of a principle of contradiction. Even so, the frontiersmen are so debased that although they are suspicious of Harrison, they cannot bring themselves to believe that he is not "on the make like the rest o' us." Theirs is the most abject level of villainy, which admits its true nature and cannot see any reason for penitence. Naturally enough, they are cowards. When they attend the Council of Vincennes, they are loud with bellicose spite, Bloat announces that "I'd vittle them [the Indians] with lead pills if I was Guvner". But when Tecumseh draws his hatchet at the end of the talks, Harrison "stands unmoved" while "Twang and his friends disappear", from the scene and the play.

Mair uses these characters, as Shrive has pointed out, as a contrast to the Loyalist citizens of Upper Canada, who march to war boldly singing of freedom and determination.<sup>10</sup> But the frontiersmen function as more than a contrast of national character, for this is no ordinary war. The sympathetic character of Harrison makes it clear that this is in fact a civil war between two members of a racial family who share centuries of common history. The causes of war are complex; Harrison fights for principle, but the frontiersmen are interested only in plunder and territorial expansion. They are



enemies not just to the established bourgeoisie and yeomanry of Upper Canada, but to the sensibilities of the Anglo-Saxon race as a whole. Their revolution was conceived as a constitutional democracy, but has been corrupted into the anarchic rule of an uneducated proletariat. Mair's eulogistic portrayal of the Canadian farmer is also an attempt to define the class loyalties of the British Empire. The bourgeois rule, with its titled aristocrats and landed gentry is indistinguishable from patriotic righteousness.

It is here that Mair is compelled to distort historical fact to further his thesis. His next order of villainy is that of the Yankee settlers in Upper Canada, whom he represents as a disaffected minority in the province. In Act IV, scene 1, Brock receives a deputation of these settlers in his capacity as Lieutenant-Governor. He has little patience with the Settlers, who ask to be excused military service. In his words, they want to "meanly shirk their service to the Crown." The laws of Upper Canada required that all able-bodied men be enrolled in the militia; the settlers, as recent immigrants from the United States, are reluctant to war against their brothers. When they protest that

It ain't quite fair  
To call out settlers from the other side[.]

Brock responds with a rare burst of temper

From it yet on it too! Why came you thence?  
Is land so scarce in the United States?  
Are there no empty townships, wilds or wastes  
In all their borders, but you must encroach  
On ours? And being here, how dare you make  
you dwelling-places harbours of sedition

And furrow British soil with alien ploughs  
 To feed our enemies? There is not scope,  
 Nor room enough in all this wilderness  
 For men so base.

In the face of this logic, the settlers retreat from principle to cowardice. They announce that

.....Canada  
 Is naught compared with the United States.  
 We have no faith in her, but much in them.

Brock is assured by an aid that these settlers represent only a (small fraction of the inhabitants of the province. In fact, dissent was more widespread than Mair makes out.<sup>11</sup>

But for Mair's purpose, it was necessary to localize this discontent to one particular segment of society: the militia legend required it. Brock himself was not impressed with the loyalty and martial spirit of the Upper Canadians. Shortly after the declaration of war in 1812, he reported to the War Office that,

My situation is most critical, not from anything the enemy can do, but from the disposition of the people-- The population, believe me, is essentially bad-- A full belief possesses them all that this Province must inevitably succumb...Legislators, Magistrates, Militia officers, all, have imbibed this idea, and are so sluggish and indifferent in their respective offices.....<sup>12</sup>

It is true that as the war progressed, this attitude changed; Brock was writing at the beginning of a war that was to last three years. We may assume that Mair was sincere in his belief that dissent was the property of the American settlers alone, as the militia tradition was firmly established in his day.

The settlers exit "ruefully" when Brock gives them the choice of fighting or leaving the province, lest they "dangle nearer Heaven than they wish". But before they leave, he gives them an article of faith. This passage is, with Lefroy's description of the prairies, one of the most-quoted from the play. It establishes Brock as a visionary of the Canada First school, and confirms that like Harrison, he is waging a war of principle.

For I believe in Britain's Empire, and  
In Canada, its true and loyal son,  
Who yet shall rise to greatness, and shall stand  
At England's shoulder helping her to guard  
True liberty throughout a faithless world.

The evocation of the Nicene Creed suggested in the language of this passage is a deliberate attempt on Mair's part to stress the moral imperative of the British Empire. Brock recognizes that this minor provincial war is a significant turning point in the history of civilization. He shares this attitude with Tecumseh, who knows that this must be the last stand of his people. This is of course an essential process in the creation of a national myth. The smallest event must be shown to have historical significance, and there can be no room for chance.

The Americans--Harrison, the frontiersmen, the settlers--are the major antagonists in Tecumseh but they are not alone. As agents of anarchy, they provide the opposing ideology to the scheme of the play, but they are abetted by dissension within Tecumseh's camp. Structurally, if Tecumseh is two plays joined by Lefroy's tragedy and the governing ideology, the



Americans do not fully emerge as the principle antagonists until Act IV. Prior to that, it is the Prophet who exerts the greatest active force against Tecumseh. As we have seen, he is the antagonist in Lefroy's sub-plot, until superseded by the Americans.

While the villainy of the Americans is complex, the Prophet's is simple: it stems from his own perverse nature. Of all the characters in the play, he is the most conventionally melodramatic, that is to say, the least defined by the unique circumstances of the historical setting. He is the first character on stage in Act I, and he enters in a manner reminiscent of Richard III. Tecumseh has been absent for a year, and the Prophet has succeeded in extending his own power. His sole motive, as he admits, is revenge:

Yet my vindictive nature hath a craft,  
In action slow, which matches mother-earth's;  
First seed-time--then the harvest of revenge.  
Who works for power, and not the good of men,  
Would rather win by fear than lose by love,  
Not Tecumseh--rushing to his ends,  
And followed by men's love--whose very foes  
Trust him the most. Rash fool! Him do I dread,  
And his imperious spirit.

The Prophet has the melodramatic villain's recognition of his own impotence in the face of good. Tecumseh intimidates him, and when he hears of his brother's return, he laments the "greatness" that must now elude him. But the Prophet is not playing Iago when he "panders" to Tecumseh. He shares a genuine and justified hatred of the Americans, which he takes out on all whites. Of Tecumseh he says

.....I know his thoughts--  
 That I am but a helper to his ends;  
 And, were there not a whirlpool in my soul  
 Of hatred which would fain engulf our foes.  
 I would engage my cunning and my craft  
 'Gainst his simplicity, and win the lead.

It is ironic that the Prophet should perform one decisive action in the play, and that for a worthy cause. He candidly admits his megalomania and hatred for Tecumseh, but he is prepared to suppress these feelings for the good of the cause. Because he allows himself to be governed by his emotions, and cannot resist the opportunity for personal glory, he precipitates the disaster at Tippecanoe. It would not be difficult to read into Tecumseh's foolhardy trust in the Prophet a conscious parallel to Othello and Iago. It might even be argued that Mair was attempting in this way to suggest a tragic flaw in Tecumseh's character. But it will be seen that the Prophet has little to do with the tragedy that Mair attempts in Act V. Further, the Othello parallel is weakened by the observation that while Othello trusted unwisely in a world of duplicity, Tecumseh trusts wisely in a world of principle. That the Prophet should prove unworthy of this trust is, in the ethical scheme of Tecumseh, a rare occurrence. Tecumseh is aware of his brother's shortcomings; his weakness is that he believes that he can control the Prophet. In fact, he does so in the end, for after Tippecanoe, the Prophet is disgraced, although he is presumably present at Detroit.

With the exception of his hatred for the Americans, the Prophet is antithetical to Tecumseh, and this has had a demoral-

lizing effect on the subordinate chiefs. The Prophet is the religious leader of the Indians; his mission, as Tecumseh explains it, is to "lead our people back to ancient ways". It is part of Tecumseh's design that the Prophet's influence should spread, as this will aid his task of uniting the tribes, but he is wary of his brother's methods. When the Prophet boasts that "all our people follow me in fear", Tecumseh replies, "Would that they follow you in love!" The contrast between despotism and justice is repeated in Act 11, scene 1, when the Prophet denounces those chiefs who have signed degrading treaties with the Americans as "wizened snakes" who must be "destroyed at once". Tecumseh's not unexpected reply is a plea for mercy.

This contrast of temperaments enables Mair to sidestep the problem of Indian atrocities. The Prophet is typical of those Indians--a minority, Mair tells us--who engage in torture and bloodsport. In fact, it is necessary that Tecumseh reprimand the Prophet for allowing the torture and burning of prisoners left in his care. The Prophet personifies those aspects of Indian life which Mair found distasteful, for the Victorian sentiment, with its emphasis on "just thought" could not reconcile the contradiction of a barbaric and cruel "noble savage". Tecumseh is the glorified ideal of the white man's Indian; the Prophet and his followers are perversions. The extent of that perversion may be seen in the fact that like Tecumseh, the Prophet makes frequent references to nature--but his nature is chaotic and deadly.



Although he is ruled by malicious spite, the Prophet's most dangerous fault is his intemperance in politics. His religious authority, is responsible for the catastrophe at Tippecanoe. His warriors fall in needless slaughter because, as one of Harrison's aids explains,

They trusted in the Prophet's rites and spells,  
Which promised them immunity from death.  
All night he sat on yon safe eminence,  
Howling his songs of war and mystery,  
Then fled, at dawn, in fear of his own braves.

Prior to the Council of Vincennes, the prelude to Tippecanoe, the Prophet and Tecumseh join hands in symbolic friendship to encourage their followers. Tecumseh is willing to believe in his brother's sincerity, declaring that

.....I am grieved  
That aught befell to shake our proper love.  
Our purpose is too high, and full of danger;  
We have too vast a quarrel on our hands  
To waste our breath on this.

But like the frontiersmen who find Harrison's integrity incredible, the Prophet believes that Tecumseh is as much a schemer as he is himself. There is an ambiguity about the battle of Tippecanoe on Mair's part, for it is provoked by one villain and lost by another. The Prophet believes that Tecumseh means him to cool his heels while he searches for greater glory; thus he is anxious to score a victory of his own. The Prophet is left with the strict order to avoid trouble, and Mair suggests that by violating this command he is responsible for the defeat.

As events develop, we see that the Prophet has little choice; he must defend his people against the Americans. Harrison, as we have seen, is guided by his principles, even if he

must go against his stated orders. He stage-manages the battle, but he is not responsible for the defeat of the Indians.

Mair's ambivalence is indicated by the textural confusion regarding the actual events leading up to the battle. He makes it clear that Harrison is prepared to disobey his orders to incite war, but when the battle occurs, it is by the Prophet's initiative. We are left with the conclusion that Harrison has advanced upon Tippecanoe with avowedly peaceful intentions; his officers after all, have encamped on ground suggested by the Indians. But this duplicity on Harrison's part is never clearly established in the text, although its purpose is clear, for it exonerates Harrison of responsibility for the battle.

In order to place the responsibility for the disaster on the Prophet's shoulder, Mair idealizes the role of ethical motive as a determinant. Harrison is blameless, but the Prophet can only defend himself at the cost of betraying Tecumseh's trust. "Why should I hesitate," he asks,

.....My promises!  
My duty to Tecumseh! What are these  
Compared with duty here? Where I perceive  
A near advantage, there my duty lies;  
Consideration strong which overweighs  
All other reason.

The Prophet is tempted by the opportunity Harrison has presented, and it is in his reasoning that we see his duplicity:

.....Revenge is sick  
To think of such advantage flung aside.  
For what? To let Tecumseh's greatness grow....

By seizing the moment, he will further his own political ends. His desire for action is not based on a consideration

for his people, but a neurotic lust for power. Mair uses the Prophet's promise of invincibility to resolve a contradiction, lest it appear that despite his villainy, the Prophet is performing a sympathetic action. We are left with the implication that had Tecumseh been present, he too would have ordered the attack. But in his case, it would have been successful, for in the scheme of the play the tide of battle depends on leadership, which in turn derives its effectiveness from principle. The romantic mind would rather see the battle of Waterloo as won on the playing fields of Eton, than as a victory based on a combination of chance, skill, and bad weather. The Prophet's downfall is in keeping with the archetypal conventions of melodrama in which the hero (or, in the case, the hero-surrogate, Harrison) wins by forcing the villain into a situation where his strengths work against him. The victory of good over evil is not one of strength, but of design. The struggle is systematized: virtue wins because it is right, which is to say, decorous, and evil loses because it is wrong, an indecorous solution to the dramatic problem.

There are two remaining villains in the play, one relatively simple, and the other as complex as Harrison. The simple one is General Hull, the American commander of Fort Detroit, whose fate it is to lose his command and career, to the outnumbered forces of Brock and Tecumseh, without firing a shot. He is a pathetic figure, described by one of his subordinates as a "bleached and doting relic of stale time," and Mair takes care to excuse his surrender of the fort. This



is the first major British victory of the war, and it is not sufficient that Hull falls to Brock's bluff. Were Hull merely a coward, Brock's victory would be considerably diminished, for there is little glory in accepting a coward's sword. Thus we find Hull in his two scenes, Act IV, scenes IV and VIII, beset by poor advice and slovenly support from his troops. His prudence is seemingly justified by the rumour of Brock's impending advance, for he realizes that superior though his force is, it cannot hope to defeat volunteers "all burning to avenge their father's wrongs".

In all respects but one, the aged Hull is the anti-thesis to the youthful Harrison. That similarity, however, is crucial. Hull is a man of honour, wise enough to know that he is fighting for a dishonourable cause. But where Harrison charges ahead, Hull stalls. He is almost petulant as he complains of the disrespect shown by his men, and he is tired of war. But like Harrison, he does not shirk from responsibility, however, he may try to diminish it. His surrender of the fort is the last step in his gradual defeat, for he has no faith in the country for whose liberty he fought years earlier.

Oh, Jefferson, what mischief have you wrought--  
 Confounding Nature's order, setting fools  
 To prank themselves, and sit in wisdom's seat  
 By right divine, out-Heroding a king's!  
 But I shall keep straight on--pursue my course,  
 Responsible and with authority...

After his surrender, as he awaits Brock, Hull reveals another aspect of his pathos. He is what we might today call a paranoid politician, blaming his defeat on external causes. When

one of his officers tells him that "what begins in honour so should end," Hull replies by wishing that all his men had been as trusty as he. As he goes to offer Brock his sword, he is set upon by a group of militiamen who demand that he hold the fort. His reply is angry; he curses the volunteers for their "muddy hearts" and lack of discipline.

Oh, if I had a thousand more of men,  
A thousand less of things--which is your name--  
I would defend this Fort, and keep it too.

Hull's surrender is excused by his bitterness against his country, and the poor fighting spirit of his troops. He recognizes that surrender is his only recourse, but one cannot help but wonder if Brock, or Harrison, could be excused such an act.

Hull is a man of honour betrayed by his nation. When he offers his sword in surrender, Brock tells him to keep it, for it is common knowledge that Hull carried it in honour in his youth. The revolutionary has been undone by his revolution; still, he cannot help but feel the shame of defeat;

Trenton and Saratoga speak for me! (Aside)  
I little thought that I should have to knead,  
In my gray years, this lumpy world again.  
But, when my locks were brown, my heart aflame  
For liberty, believe me, sir, this sword  
Did much to haffle your imperious King!

The fact that the United States should have to depend on aged veterans like Hull speaks for the erosion of moral strength in that country. Hull is a living testimony of the debilitated republic, which can only triumph now because of rare prodigies like Harrison. Once more, Harrison's stature is increased by contrast with his compatriots.

The final, and more complex, villain is Brock's subordinate and successor, Proctor. Portraying Proctor as a coward was a safe move for Mair, for in this he had historical evidence on his side. But it did not prevent a small controversy in the pages of the Toronto Daily Mail several years after the publication of the play, regarding his faithfulness to the historical character.

Proctor is responsible for the catastrophe at Moravian Town, which closes the play; like the Prophet, he virtually delivers victory to Harrison. And like the Prophet's his defeat is the consequence of more than inept generalship. Proctor is not established immediately as a villain. As Brock's subordinate prior to the capture of Detroit, he is introduced only as a weak but useful officer, whose prudence is in Brock's words, "a vice", but not a serious handicap to the British cause.

While under Brock's supervision, Proctor's potential to endanger his cause is limited. Notable as it is, his prudence is not yet unusual. Despite his reservations, Proctor attends faithfully during the Detroit campaign, and is left in charge of the fort when Brock moves onto Niagara and his death. As Brock prepares to leave, Tecumseh expresses his misgivings over Proctor's appointment.

Tecumseh: I know him very well.  
My brother's friend says "Go!" but you  
say Come!"

Brock: (Aside) How am I straitened for good officers'

Despite these apprehensions, Proctor is not yet recognized as an outright coward, although he has failed the most



important test of the play: he has been scorned by the champions. But immediately after this scene, Brock is killed, and Proctor assumes the high command.

Act V begins with a Chorus, predicting "sad remaining scenes--a coward's part." The prediction is realized in the subsequent conversation between the militia colonels Elliot and Baby, who complain of Proctor's reluctance to fight, and suggest that he harmed the cause by demobilizing the volunteers. That the new general is indifferent to the volunteers, who naturally resent being treated as conscripts, is not a surprising development when we recall that Proctor is held responsible by the Americans for the massacre of prisoners in his command. But more dangerous than his boasting and cowardice is his hostility to Tecumseh, whom he has insulted. The prospect is bleak for the Canadians: they have suffered defeat on the Great Lakes, Brock is dead, and Hull has been replaced by Harrison. In the moment of grave crisis, the cause is in the hands of the least worthy man, who proceeds to alienate his most valuable ally. Baby and Elliot are aware that Proctor will retreat when threatened by Harrison. Open conflict is imminent between Proctor and Tecumseh, for the Indian chief realizes that retreat would spell disaster. Tecumseh is "calm on the surface, but convulsed beneath." We have already seen how the Prophet serves to contrast with Tecumseh's wisdom and benevolence as a leader. His encounter with Proctor shows us the man of action. Up to this point, Tecumseh has been primarily a politician, defying Harrison and planning strategy with

Brock. With his people, we have seen him as a patriarch. With Proctor, he is a fighter.

In the confrontation which climaxes Act V, scene 1, Tecumseh is so enraged by Proctor's lack of leadership that he draws his hatchet. He is only restrained when Baby and Elliot promise that the army will stand against Harrison, despite Proctor's intentions. As a man whose emotional qualities reflect his moral worth, Tecumseh loses his temper several times in the play--against Harrison at Vincennes, the Prophet after Tippecanoe, and now at Proctor. Each time this rage is a recognition of impending disaster. In that sense, Tecumseh's wrath is almost divine; it is not a selfish temper that comes from frustration, but a righteous defiance of corruption. In this case, he only loses his temper when his attempt to treat with Proctor as one man of honour to another fails. Proctor ignores Tecumseh's request that he honour Britain's commitment to the Indians; he is blind to the extent of suffering that they have undergone for the British cause. His arrogant unconcern bodes more than defeat for the British; it will also spell total defeat for the Indian nation. He even refuses Tecumseh's request for arms so that the Indians can stand alone. Brushing aside all protests, he makes a vague promise that, once in the woods, the army will find "some footing for defence." As a general, Proctor is a dissembler; as a man, callous. In the end, Tecumseh can only revile him:

Seek your own kind!  
Go boom in festering swales, or, like a frog,  
Croak your dull night-song in the standing pool--  
Your voice is not a man's.

Even when challenged with such debasing and demasculating insults, Proctor is too indifferent to defend his honour. He ignores Tecumseh, telling his officers,

This chief is fevered.  
Explain the why and wherefore of retreat,  
Then let him come or stay; I care not.

Tecumseh's anger is due to more than Proctor's military irresponsibility. We see the general as a character type familiar to Mair and his generation: the incompetent staff officer to whom all reversals are attributed, the ubiquitous Colonel Blimp. Proctor carries himself with all the pomposity of the British Raj, a martinet to his subordinates, and a racial overlord to the Indians. He treats Tecumseh as an inferior native, which, as we may conclude from Brock's noble humanism, is contrary to the supposed ideals of the Empire.

Proctor finally takes his stand at Moravian Town, but it is too late. He commands only the Indians and a small force of regular troops

"Whose sickly frames and broken confidence  
Would scarcely face the effigies of foes!"

It is implied that it was his dismissal of the volunteers that will prove his undoing, although even that dismissal was only one of many proofs of his villainy. Proctor takes his stand in Act V, scene V, only because Tecumseh refuses to retreat further. When he blusters and praises the terrain, Tecumseh lets him know that retreat was literally unnatural, thus forecasting defeat.

Proctor. Why, here are maples scarce three men in girth  
With their encircling arms. What Trees!



Tecumseh.            Yes, yes--  
                       Would they were true soldiers, brother,  
                       they are strong,  
                       And, being rooted to their places, would ne'er  
                       Give way as we have done.....

The impending defeat is ascribed in advance to Proctor, not only because he has lost the advantage, but because he has violated the very principles of nature itself. Brock prospered from Tecumseh's advice because he knew that the Indians share nature's wisdom.

Proctor is unable to recognize that a mere savage can be wiser than he. He is a coward, one who allows his imagination to interfere with his responsibility, and he is too bound by the conventions of civilization to benefit from Tecumseh's brand of wisdom. Unconsciously, he is no better than the Americans, for like them, he has "confounded Nature's order."

When Proctor gives in to Tecumseh's demand to fight, he as much as admits his weakness--in fact, he asks Tecumseh to deploy the forces for him. This is the moment he concedes defeat. His final moments on stage are, like Hull's, pathetic; he too attempts to justify his defeat by blaming others. The scene closes with a soliloquy, in which he complains that others "misconceive" his actions, and renounces the principles of an officer and gentleman:

Tecumseh foolishly resolves to die--  
 For who, against such odds, can hope to live?  
 And, if there be a virtue in mere death,  
 Then he is welcome to his grave and all  
 The honour and glory death can give.  
 But those who have some business still on earth--  
 Something to do that cannot else be done--  
 Look on this matter with a different eye.

The apparent pragmatism of this attitude is nullified by Brock's gallant charge at the head of his troops at Queenston Heights, and Tecumseh's cry, "Here must I fight, and for my people die!" Proctor's concern is not the result of a realistic appraisal of his strategic value, which would be wasted in a foredoomed battle, as he suggests, for we know already that he is afraid for his life. He has ordered his carriage prepared in case of an emergency, but he is not a Napoleon fleeing from the defeat of Waterloo. He has no intention of guiding the battle, as his surrender of tactical command to Tecumseh attests. Leadership, in Mair's view, amounts to more than tactics. The good commander, like Brock and Tecumseh, leads his men by inspiring them with his own example, and thus it is his duty to assume personal risk. A case could be made that Brock would have served his cause better by staying behind the lines at Queenston Heights and saving his life. But the fact that he did not raises him above the level of a merely competent general; his foolhardy death, itself is made responsible for the victory. Proctor is aware, but unwilling to accept, that there is more to death than "honour and glory."

Mair includes in his notes the fact that Proctor was court-martialled and found guilty at the close of the war in 1814, but that punishment is inconsequential compared to the one he has already achieved by the end of the play. He is reviled by all, including Harrison, who implies that the battle was won by the Americans because of "The craven Proctor's flight of

followers." An enemy's contempt is always ignoble; Harrison's contempt is particularly damaging. Harrison does not even gloat over his victory or express any pride in it. As a gentleman, he knows that the British had to pay too high a price for defeat.

Structurally, Proctor is the main antagonist in the last act of the play, as his confrontation with Tecumseh forces the catastrophe. But even so, he, like the Prophet, is an instrument in the hands of the major threat: anarchy. As a villain whose actions are motivated by a moral flaw rather than a hostile spite, Proctor is a pathetic functionary. His is a particular kind of villainy, almost one of default. The moral scheme of the play demands that everyone commit himself utterly, for victory can only be won by an extraordinary effort. Proctor cannot bring himself to make that effort, and thus cannot inspire it in others. In the end he loses his chance for victory because his is indifferent to it.

#### The Heroes

As there are graduated orders of villainy, so are there different levels of heroism in Tecumseh. Lefroy has already been discussed; there remain Tecumseh himself, Brock and the broad group of Loyalists, comprising the incidental citizens of Upper Canada, the Volunteers, and the various militia officers.

Because the heroes personify specific ideals and moral qualities, their actions are more restricted than the villains. The villain, although he embodies a threat recognized as such



by the audience, may be motivated by any one of a number of reasons, dependent only on the playwright's imagination and the thematic requirement that this motivation be suitable to oppose the ideals of the hero. In this sense, the melodramatist has greater freedom of invention when creating the villain, so long as the character of the villain is antipathetic to the audience's collective sense of decorum as determined by the moral scheme of the play. Mair was able to create complex villains: Proctor is prudent but guilty of hubris; Hull is past his prime but lacking in moral resolution; Harrison is a gentleman and natural ally of good sentiment, but an American aggressor; and the Prophet burns with righteous injustice, but is power-mad. The minor villains, the frontiersmen and the Yankee settlers, lack this complexity because they are merely pictorial depictions, what Arnold called "illustrations".

This complexity may not always succeed in developing the theme of the play, but it does enrich the characters of the antagonists. The same is not the case with the heroes.

Archer complained that the poetic drama was lifeless, that the characters do not seem to come alive on the stage.<sup>13</sup> This is another way of saying that they do not perform plausible dramatic actions--a lifeless, or wooden, character is static. We have seen that Mair uses the expression of sentiment in place of dramatic action, asking an audience to sympathize with a character's thoughts and beliefs rather than his actions. Because the melodramatic hero is defined by his antagonist, coming to life only when vitalized by threat, he must be rela-

tively simple. The hero can only be as complex as the playwright's ideal of virtue. In the case of Tecumseh, the heroes are simple because Mair's ideology was an uncritical formulation of social prejudices, or, to borrow the phrase he put in Harrison's mouth, right thinking. The doctrine expressed by Brock and Tecumseh is simple, but it is challenged by complex threats, of which the most significant is the anarchistic American concept of republicanism. Only once in the play is there a moment when Mair's ideology takes a complex turn, and even then it is not developed. It occurs in Act V, scene VI, in the final reversal of Tecumseh's vision, when he renounces all whites, including the British. But as we shall see, Mair still manages to keep this moment safely within his sense of Imperialist decorum.

The first group of heroes to be considered are the United Empire Loyalists, who divide into the citizens of York, and the Volunteers. The militia officers, Baby, Elliot, Nichol and McKee, come within this category, but they are best considered as reflections of Brock. It is notable that of all the soldiers represented in the play, only four are regular British troops: Brock, Proctor, and Brock's aides-de-champ, Glegg and MacDonnel. Mair not only neglected the British and Quebecois troops, he wrote them out of his history, for their presence could only subtract from the militia legend. Perhaps Mair would reply that these troops merely did their duty and for that reason deserve no special mention, whereas the Upper Canadian volunteers fought to preserve their homes. This glorification leads Mair to subscribe to the false tradition which interprets Brock's last words as praise of the militia.

In Act V, scene 1, Elliot attempts to admonish Proctor, telling him of Brock's glorious death, which

.....lashed his followers  
Up to a sure and terrible revenge.

According to Elliot--and common tradition--Brock's last words were, "Push on, my brave York Volunteers!" In actual fact, this is a distortion of what was actually a last-minute command to bring the militia out of reserve: "Push on the York Volunteers."<sup>14</sup> But last words, no matter how mundane, have a way of becoming exhortations after the fact, especially on the battle-field.

In his notes to the play, Mair provides a summary of his version of the Loyalist tradition:

When the war of 1812 broke out, the old loyalists and their hardy sons, burning under the recollection of their wrongs...rallied around Brock to defend once more the unity of the Empire...The whole population turned out to fight for Canada.

The incidental Loyalists make three entrances in Tecumseh, all in Act IV. Mair parallels the main action of the act with quick vignettes of old men, and volunteers preparing for war. Just as the American frontiersmen provide the common-man's view of the action, these Loyalists regard their hero from afar, and help us calibrate Brock's greatness.

Act IV, scene 11 begins with two Loyalists who prepare the way for Brock's second entrance in the play. Here more than anywhere else we may find some validity in Shrive's claim that Tecumseh is a dramatic pageant, for Brock's entrance is followed by a parade of Volunteers, who are called upon to



march across the stage in company formation.<sup>15</sup> The two Loyalists are fullsome in their praise for Brock, but our acceptance of it is inhibited by their slavish admiration of his most insignificant actions. They call his speech from the throne

"...a text to fortify"  
Imperial doctrine and Canadian rights.

The final sentence of the speech, which concludes with the clause that "a country defended by freemen, enthusiastically devoted to their cause and constitution, can never be conquered ..." is

.....a sentence to be framed  
And hung in every honourable heart  
For daily meditation.

We could perhaps accept this praise as decorous in the context of the play, were it not for the assertion that

There is magic in this soldier's tongue  
Oh, language is a common instrument,  
But when a master touches it, what sounds!

It would appear that the purpose of this brief scene is twofold: to demonstrate the enthusiastic support of the common man, and to insert the quotation from Brock into the action in a credible manner. One need only compare these two Loyalists with their American counterparts to find an example of the restrictions of decorum. The frontiersmen are free to wander in their conversation; their language is idiomatic, and their subjects range from war to atrocity to liquor and their families. The heroes, especially those who appear only briefly, are confined to the immediate topic of the moment. Their every word

must express a lofty sentiment.

The impression of a pageant is continued in the subsequent scene, when two old men speak of their desire to be young, so that they too could join the Volunteers. Reinforcing the motif of chivalry, a passing citizen tells them of

.....our Canadian maids,  
Strained by their parting lovers to their breasts;  
And loyal mothers busy around their lords,  
Buckling their arms on, or, with tearful eyes,  
Kissing them to the war.

These old men are of course the survivors of the first generation of Loyalists who settled the area, and their function is to provide a continuity through the generations. The years of peace they have enjoyed have been revealed as a respite only, for their sons go to meet the same enemy they themselves fought decades earlier. The old men envy the Volunteers; they can conceive of "no better journey" than that to war. There is an ambivalence in their--and Mair's--attitude to war, for on the one hand it is a splendid test of nationhood, wherein a national sentiment is forged in romantic adventure, while on the other it is a destructive confusion of the natural order. War is not something to be desired, but it is beneficial, and a source of pride--a necessary and not unpleasant stage in a nation's growth.

That journey is made greater by its hazards. The romantic sentiment envisions victory as a triumph over awesome peril, and when that peril is minor, it must be magnified so that it assumes a metaphorical significance. In Tecumseh the minor hazards encountered by the Canadian Militia support

Bentley's idea that in melodrama, even circumstances are enlisted in the enemy rank. The two old men are informed that the Volunteers will have to cross Lake Erie in open boats, braving "Erie's treachrous floods". The crossing is

.....an awful hazard--  
A danger which in apprehension lies,  
Yet palpable unto the spirit's touch  
As earth to finger.

The march to the front itself becomes a campaign of endurance. Victory cannot be easily won, for if it is, the threat of the enemy is diminished. Every step the army takes on its journey is another stage of an epic, which climaxes with the final encounter with the enemy forces.

Brock's address to the Volunteers prior to their departure, along with his lectures to Lefroy and the dissident settlers, form the text of Imperialism as Mair understood it. To Lefroy, Brock preached the necessity of the secular state; to the settlers, he proved the need for the British connection. To the Volunteers, he preaches the Empire Militant, comparing the

.....peerless arch  
Of Freedom's raising, whose majestic span  
Is axis to the world.....

with the United States, whose

.....poison plant, false liberty,  
Runs o'er his body politic and kills  
Whilst seeming to adorn it.....

This is Brock the warrior, the servant of "armed Justice", who calls upon his men to turn their "bayonets to pens and write in blood:--Here lies the poor invader." He



exhorts his men to face death squarely:

We reck not if this strange mechanic frame  
Stop in an instant in the shock of war.  
Our death may build into our country's life,  
And failing this, 'twere better still to die  
Then live the breathing spoils of infamy.

This is a standard patriotic theme, a common clause of modern nationalism, which posits that the individual should willingly subordinate himself to the interests of his country.<sup>16</sup> One's death may benefit his country by establishing first of all victory, and secondly a memorial to inspire future generations. Tecumseh implies something similar when he says in Act V,

.....as men foredoomed to war or death--  
Let valour make excuse that we shall live.

For the Canadians and the Indians, because they are fighting in defense of their homes, this is a war of absolutes, total war, for which there can be compromise. It is ironic, but not germane to Mair's scheme that the war in fact was ended by a negotiated compromise in 1814; as we shall see, this is but one of several reasons why Mair precludes reference within the text to the close of the war. For Brock and Tecumseh, it is not enough that they repel the invader; they must ensure that history will not be repeated. But again this is an idea not fully developed in the play, for the concept of a total war is contradicted by the recurrent motif of chivalry and honour, which may be seen on both sides, as when Brock accepts Hull's surrender, and Harrison treats the captive Colonel Baby with the courtesy of an equal.

This apparent contradiction does not affect Mair's handling of his theme; indeed, it can be explained in the same manner as the paradox of a noble Harrison at the head of a merciless invasion. Chivalry is confined to officers of a certain class, whose like interests transcend national barriers. Thus Lefroy and the unnamed officer in Act V meet as equals, as do Brock and Hull, Harrison and Baby. They are equal not in ability, but in sentiment. The remaining soldiers are fighting a different kind of war, and it is significant that we never see the Volunteers in actual battle. They evoke a romantic picture of chivalry only in their leavetaking, when the march to war is virtually equated to an epic quest. In a very real sense, the view Mair offers us of the "journey" to war is from the perspective of the chivalric elite. We see the soldiers preparing for combat in the way Mair would imagine that Brock saw them. The playwright's narrative identity is with the leaders, not the rank and file. It could not be otherwise, considering the play's polemical purpose, which was to justify a specific social ideology of the bourgeoisie.

The main characters of the play have individual traits and sentiments, no matter how uniform they may ultimately appear. But they are almost independent when compared to the characters of the Volunteers. Just as the frontiersmen represent the anarchic dangers of America, the Volunteers represent the solidarity of a community cemented in resolve. In fact, they very rarely speak, and only then through the mouthpieces of their officers, Baby, Elliot, Robinson and McKee. The rank

and file remain merely that. They sing in unison, and although Mair intended their song to be a national anthem which would, he hoped, become popular in Canada, it is more than a rousing anthem.<sup>17</sup> It is the voice of the Massman, as Mair conceived it, resolute in purpose, joyous in unity, and aware of historical destiny. As the Volunteers march past Brock, they sing,

.....  
 Arise! then, arise! let us rally and form  
 And rush like the torrent, and sweep like the storm  
 On the foes of our King, of our country adored,  
 Of the flag that was lost, but in exile restored!

.....  
 Our hearts are as one, and our spirits are free,  
 From clime unto clime, and from sea unto sea!  
 And chaos may come to the States that annoy,  
 But our Empire united, what foe can destroy?  
 .....

The Volunteers are not a collection of farmers marching to save their homes, but a crusade marching into myth. The suggested pattern of their campaign in the notion of a flag lost and restored in exile places them in a mythic dimension. Their war is more than local history, and if they are nameless, Mair might argue, so were the men who fell at Marathon. This attempt to treat the war in grandiose terms is one of the reasons that Tecumseh seems false today. It is not simply that we feel little emotion about the War of 1812 today--Shakespeare, after all, does not require an emotional identification with the Wars of the Roses to make his history plays sensible to an audience. There is a self-conscious quality about Tecumseh, as if Mair himself realized that much of his material was significant only in an anecdotal sense,



and tried to compensate accordingly. The play exhorts so constantly and so vehemently that one is bound to react with suspicion. It would be difficult to believe that a contemporary British play would have to re-affirm the justice of the British cause at Waterloo as much as Mair reminds of the Canadian right in 1812. Patriotic dramas and pageants were immensely popular in Great Britain and the United States in the late nineteenth-century, but they celebrated different values. The quality of patriotism Mair puts into the dialogue of his play would seem unnecessary, even tautological, in a comparable British work, which more often than not personified the heroism of the common man, who, despite his discontent with his lot, performs his duty with zeal. Mair's deliberate aversion to any hint of weakness in the British cause--as opposed to weakness in atypical supporters of the cause, such as Proctor--suggest an insecurity on his own part that is characteristic of the cruder forms of propaganda. That is not to suggest that Mair was insecure in his patriotism, but that Tecumseh reflects an unsure conviction that patriotism itself is a suitable basis for dramatic action. Patriotism is at once the informing value and the subject of Tecumseh.

The characterization of Brock supports this need to validate patriotism by exaggeration. Every epic struggle centres on a champion, and every national sentiment requires a father figure, and so in Act IV, Tecumseh relinquishes centre stage to Brock. Mair was aware of the dramatic imbalance this causes. According to Shrive, he wanted to include a scene depicting Brock's death, but decided otherwise,

in order to maintain his dramatic unity, which he felt depended on Tecumseh. Structurally, this problem is unresolved, but thematically it is necessary to the play.

Shrive has argued that Brock personifies the enlightened white man's benevolent attitude towards the Indians. But this is only one aspect of Brock's function in the play. In his capsule biography of Brock in his notes, Mair tells us that he was born in 1769--"the year which gave Napoleon and Wellington to the world", and that Canadians "look upon him as the Americans look upon Washington." Mair is in fact proposing Brock as the founder of his country, the patriarch who supervised the assertion of nationhood. Ideally, this is an honour more appropriate to the protagonist of a national dream, but the intended protagonist, Tecumseh, as an Indian, could not qualify. It would fit Mair's theme had Brock outlived Tecumseh, for the romance Mair has created almost demands that Brock be Tecumseh's successor in a new age. But even so, Brock's heroic death is easily transformed into a legend which can replace the living man.

Mair's choice of Brock as a founding father is due exclusively to the fact that Brock inspired the initial Canadian victories of the war. But he was also an opportune choice, for he represents the qualities that Mair most admired; he was a war hero, an Imperialist, and an Englishman. The nation Brock founded, according to Mair, was characterized by militant patriotism, the Imperial bond, and Anglo-Saxon supremacy. The fact that Brock was only one in a succession of Lieutenants-

Governor of Upper Canada, which began with George Simcoe, did not deter Mair. Having never suffered defeat, Brock died in the midst of a glorious victory, and that one achievement was sufficient to transform him into a legend. The fact that Brock was a military governor to whom the idea of a Canadian nation might well have been insignificant could not stand in the way of legend. His shortcomings could be glossed over in the same way that the Americans whitewashed Washington.

Dramatically, Brock is related to Tecumseh; they are complementary aspects of one superman. They have different traits, but these are illustrative, such as Tecumseh's quick temper, and their material concerns are in the end different. But their sentiments and moralities are similar. They are both authoritative and tolerant, endowed with a militant sense of justice, and they inspire total loyalty in their subordinates.

A hero's subordinates are, like his enemies, his measure. The militia officers who advise and learn from Brock are personifications of the anonymous sentiments of the Volunteers they command. They are Brock's comrades, in spirit as well as arms; as such their thematic function is to integrate Brock with the Canadian sentiment. Through them, because of their similarity, he becomes a Canadian. After his death, they are his legacies to Canada. They defy Proctor and encourage Tecumseh to follow him as far as Moravian Town, as Brock would have it. Their major concerns are honour and manliness, which is a synonym for justice, and in that sense, they are fragmented aspects of Brock seeded about the Canadian landscape.



We have seen how Brock exemplifies martial spirit and ideological purity. The remaining trait that endears him to Tecumseh is his wisdom as a leader, and his sense of justice. It will be recalled that in Act V, Baby tells of Proctor's callous treatment of the Volunteers, which resulted in their dismissal. In Act IV, scene 11, we see Brock's attitude to those same Volunteers, whom, as we would expect, he admires for their high morale in the face of "the jarring needs of harvest-time and war".

Brock's generous grant of furloughs in time of war is repaid by his men's determination to fight, as he knew it would. Proctor, on the other hand, "soured the temper" of his men, and so did without needed support at Moravian Town. Mair's ideal leader may be authoritarian, but he is in the mould of the romantic tradition of the British officer whose authority is based on a respect for his men. Brock's authority is by appointment, but his men do not follow him because they are compelled to do so. They regard their general as their paragon, and follow him the more resolutely because they trust his judgment. This differs from the American model, where authority is undermined by democracy. As Mair would have it, the British System is based upon merit, made possible by the class structure, while the Americans must suffer for the delusions of egalitarianism. Hull discovers this at Fort Detroit when his men turn on him. Harrison is exempt because his extraordinary nobility intimidates the men under his command, and his continuous victories give them little chance or

reason to challenge his authority. From Brock's actions we can generalize Mair's principle of government: so long as men demand from their leaders the best of themselves, they are safe from despotism, of the man or the mob.

Brock is more than a general; he is the Lieutenant-Governor of a province. When he treats Tecumseh as an equal he addresses him as one political leader to another, thus recognizing Tecumseh's claim as the head of a separate and independent people. We are not shown their first meeting, but it takes place between scenes 11 and V of Act IV. The exclusion of this scene is curious, for it could provide rich possibilities for a melodramatist. In scene 11, Brock refers to Tecumseh, knowing him by repute only. He has heard that the Indian is "a noble fellow--humane, lofty, and bold, and rooted in our cause". But he is preoccupied with other matters; he must deal with a "dull and fatuous" legislature that "whips delay". The situation at Detroit is critical, and he must act quickly.

Act IV, scene V, brings Brock and Tecumseh together. Brock's staff is quartered in Colonel Baby's mansion in Sandwich, across the river from Detroit, and Tecumseh is present in his capacity as an allied general. Brock is "charmed" with the Indian chief, for he recognizes in him a kindred spirit.

When Tecumseh asks for a treaty granting that land be set aside for the Indians; Brock promises that

....If I live, possess your soul of this--  
No treaty for peace, if we prevail  
Will bear a seal that doth not guard your rights.

But he asks that for the moment, Tecumseh will "speak

of it no more", for his promise is his pledge. There is a shadow of apprehension on this pledge, however, for Tecumseh will be defeated by Brock's qualification. The British do prevail, of course, but by that time, Brock will be dead, and his promise will remain unfulfilled. Although Brock's assurances of his faith are unnecessary--no-one would question it--it is important that Mair includes this exchange. This is in fact the action which initiates Tecumseh's final recognition in Act V that the Indians stand alone, for it is this compact that is betrayed when Proctor flees from the battle at Moravian Town.

It was necessary for Mair to have this request made and for the moment deferred, but in order to excuse Brock's action, he expands it into a greater display of friendship and trust. Lest it appear that Brock is reprimanding Tecumseh for a treaty, Mair has Brock present his sash to him. In return, Tecumseh pledges his life to Brock's service. Again, we have an echoe of ancient chivalry, and after the fall of Detroit, in scene VIII Mair provides a refrain. Tecumseh enters without the sash, and Brock exclaims,

But how is this? Is friendship's gift unused?  
Where is my brother's sash?

Tecumseh is no less capable of bestowing honour than Brock--he has given the sash to one of his lesser chiefs as a badge of honour during the advance on Detroit. Brock responds with chivalric one-upmanship, calling Tecumseh "great valour's integer" and giving him his pistols. This is the



moment that moves Lefroy to an understanding of the nobility of war.

In the planning of the assault on Detroit, Brock shows himself to be a brilliant strategist surprising even Tecumseh, who sides with the militia officers in advocating a direct assault. Tecumseh is bemused by Brock's plan to bluff Hull, but is soon comforted when reminded that Hull may not accept the terms. Here Brock is the greater of the two, for he is in his own element. Tecumseh's quick temper is a useful quality when dealing with his tribesmen and moving into battle, but it is out of place in the council chambers, where tact and reason, qualities Brock has in admirable sufficiency, are required. But Brock is not just a cool diplomat. As Tecumseh says, "here is a man," prepared to accept any risk. As the army advances upon Detroit and Hull's intentions are still unclear, Brock is urged to take his place in the rear of the column, safe from gunfire. He refuses, as he must, for he is there "to lead, not to follow men". This is a foreshadowing of Queenston Heights, where Brock will be killed in exactly these circumstances. Mair makes clear that Brock's death, when it comes, will not be a freak accident, but an assumed risk. Brock would never demand that a subordinate do something he himself would not, and he is aware that if he were hit, it would inspire his men to achieve victory. He is not motivated by a vainglorious desire to be a hero; he is simply performing his duty.

Brock's final scene in the play is his acceptance of

Hull's surrender. By this time it is manifest that he is the architect of final victory, for he has won Detroit without a single casualty. His preeminence does not detract from Tecumseh's achievement--rather, it confirms it, for it is Brock's trust and friendship that has strengthened Tecumseh's resolve to ally his cause with the British. When he exits from the play, he leaves behind him a group of men who have grown under his leadership--all, in fact, but Proctor. But he also leaves an immense responsibility, for now his subordinates must rely on their own courage and ability to continue his mission. But perhaps his greatest legacy is his morality, for Brock is a warrior dedicated to the cause of peace. His last words in the play are a fitting epitaph. As he reads a list of "the spoils of bloodless victory", he says "Nought is much prized that is not won with blood." For Brock, war is not a great "journey" but a bitter sacrifice. His life and death are a testimonial to Mair's belief that a nation must not shirk from a necessary war, and that peace is only secure when it is guarded. Brock's last words in the play are a premonition of his death, a recognition that a hero must die in order to live forever. They are ambivalent, bitter at the moment, but appropriate to Mair's attempt to place the founding of the Canadian nation in the midst of war. The importance of the War of 1812 to Mair was that it proved that Canada was "won with blood," and thus sanctified.

The militia officers are under Proctor's command, and no matter how reprehensible his actions are to them, they must

obey his orders. It remains for Tecumseh to carry on Brock's struggle, as well as his own. The events in Act V suggest that Tecumseh's alliance with the British began as a political expedience and matured into something more sublime only when he met Brock. But even then, Tecumseh was not fighting for the British cause in its own right.

Tecumseh admires the British and respects their word, so much so that he has faith in their treaties, after having denounced Harrison's legalistic reason at Vincennes. It is a measure of his regard, not his distrust, that he will enter into a treaty with the British, that he will in fact demand one. Good will recognize good in melodrama, and that recognition is rewarded by good faith. Having received Brock's promise, Tecumseh could not conceive of doubting it. There is, however, a flaw in the logic of his actions in Act V, for Tecumseh accepts Brock's words not only on a personal level, but on a political level as well. They idealize the relationship between British Canada and the Indian nation. But when Proctor reneges on Brock's trust in the Indians, Tecumseh responds by rejecting the British. He knows that Proctor is unrepresentative of the British character, but his actions suggest otherwise. As we shall see, this rejection of the British is a necessary step in Tecumseh's last stand. Were Tecumseh to maintain his trust in the British despite Proctor, his death would lose its meaning.

Throughout the period of his alliance with the British Tecumseh's paramount concern is the security of his people.



His genius lies in the fact that he has countered the encroaching American republic with a political scheme, recognizing that the Indians can only treat with a government as a government. To that end, he has united the tribes, travelling

From the hot gulf up to those confines rude  
Where summer's sides are pierced with icicles.

That unity was almost a fact when destroyed by the Prophet at Tippecanoe. Thus the British alliance remained Tecumseh's sole hope to complete his mission. Mair suggests, by attributing the destruction of that mission to deceit and duplicity, in the actions of the Prophet and Proctor, that the Indian nation was destroyed accidentally, by unfair means. Yet he also suggests that it was an historical necessity, for one of the central premises of Tecumseh is that the Indian culture was the romantic precursor to the Canadian nation.

Mair's historical perspective on the defeat of the Indian nation is confused, as he attempts to reconcile romantic sentimentality with the brutal facts of what amounted to genocide. Brock's death promises eventual victory for the Canadians, but when Tecumseh dies, it is with the knowledge that his cause is lost forever. His last words in the play are an invocation: "Oh Mighty Spirit, Shelter--save--my people!" Proctor will not honour Brock's promise of a treaty, for he considers the Indians savages, who "at the best...are the worst of men". And although an eventual British victory would provide the conditions to bring Tecumseh's plans to fruition, there will be no visionary to carry on his work. In the hope for victory, Mair includes a threnody for a glorious but extinct dream.

But Mair could not simply lament the passing of a romantic ideal; he had to absolve the Canadians of any responsibility for genocide. Thus he could not conclude with the implication that Tecumseh's dream was wasted. His solution was to make the Canadian nation the spiritual legatee of Tecumseh's ideals. Although Mair doubtless believed along with the majority of his countrymen that the Indians had received just treatment in Canada, there could be no denying that they had lost their status as a free people. For his purposes, the death of Tecumseh was the end of an heroic era of Indian culture, and the passing of the old order in Tecumseh is also the celebration of the new. In his biographical note on Tecumseh, Mair expanded this idea:

As Colonel Coffin says [of Tecumseh]..."His death shed a halo on a much-abused and fast-departing race. May the people of England, and their descendants in Canada, never forget this noble sacrifice, or the sacred obligation it imposes. It should be held as the seal of a great covenant...." It is not likely his bones will be recovered; but to Canadians, whose fathers were the friends of his race, there remains the duty of perpetuating his memory. There is not in all history a nobler example of true manhood and patriotism.

In 1886, so far as Mair was concerned, the history of the Indians was a saga of the past. Hence his vision of Anglo-Saxon supremacy was not compromised by the fact that in the west of Canada there still lived a populous Indian and Metis community who followed traditional ways of life. The former were the remnant of an earlier age, and the latter were degenerate hybrids. It is not unlikely that the fact that the Indians no longer posed a threat to Canadian expansion in the

west enabled Mair to write Tecumseh. In its own way, Tecumseh is an absolution for the Canadian people even as the railroad was bringing Indian lands into the reach of Canadian commercial interests. Tecumseh provides an ethical pretext for Canada to act exactly as the Americans had acted sixty years earlier at Vincennes.

In order for Tecumseh to attain the heroic stature that makes his death the end of an era, it is necessary for him to re-assert his cause at the end of the play. Throughout Act IV, he has taken every possible opportunity to remind Brock that he is an ally fighting for his people and that his interests are different than Brock's, no matter how well they coincide. Every blow to the Americans is a victory for the Indian cause, which is motivated equally by a desire for revenge, and a strategic bid on British good faith. Brock is interested in Tecumseh primarily as a friend in the cause of justice and an allied general; he seems to have little time to consider the plight of the Indians. After the victory at Detroit, he promises Tecumseh a share in the spoils, only to be told bluntly.

Freedom I prize,  
And my poor people's welfare, more than spoils.  
No longer will they wander in the dark,  
The path is open and the sky is clear.  
We thank you for it!

Preoccupied as he is with military matters, Brock is still sympathetic to Tecumseh's cause. In his oration to the Volunteers in Act IV scene 111, he refers to the Indians as "Poor injured souls who but defend their own". But such re-



ferences are few, and for the most part, concerned with the Indians' status as allies in war, whose services he is honour bound to reward. Mair does not make Brock an outspoken champion of Indian rights, for it is sufficient that he gives his word to support them. To explore Brock's attitude further would have exposed an uncomfortable problem. We are left with the idea that the loss of Indian independence is a consequence of Brock's death and Proctor's treachery. Yet Brock is an exemplar of Imperialism, and one of the major tenets of the Empire in the popular--as opposed to the economic--mind was the Anglo-Saxon mission to educate lesser races. Tecumseh and Brock might well believe that the Indians could co-exist peacefully with the Empire, yet Mair's nostalgic lament suggests that there was no room for the "noble savage" in the modern world. Thus on the one hand, the passing of the Indian confederacy is perceived as a tragedy, and on the other as an inexorable historical fate. The tragedy is mourned in the form of the play, but the fate is an integral part of Mair's vision. A resolution of this contradiction would have required an abjuration of the myth he wanted to celebrate.

Prior to the bold but needless attack on Detroit, Tecumseh calls upon his warriors to show mercy as they conquer. He interprets the battle--which is aborted by Hull's surrender--as a turning point in the Indian cause, telling them that "We lose our lives or find our land today." This is his greatest moment since the days prior to Tippecanoe, and his dream is nearing its realization. His call for mercy against his most

hated enemies proves that despite his quick temper and warrior's delight in combat, Tecumseh is an enlightened leader. The new order he hopes to establish for his people will be founded on principles of humanity. Once more, the Indian cause is shown to share its ethical traits with the British system, for both have as their constitutional morality a respect for natural order and tolerance, as opposed to the bloody revolution of the Americans. Mair takes care to have Tecumseh ask his men to be merciful at the time when they might be excused a vindictive cruelty.

In Act V, Tecumseh's circumstances deteriorate rapidly. The impending disaster is heralded by his realization that this will be his last stand. Under Proctor's command, the British have chosen to retreat rather than face Harrison. Tecumseh can only see this as a betrayal:

Our mighty sacrifices and our service  
 Rated as nothing in this coward's plans--  
 It rends my soul.....

At the end of scene 11, Tecumseh lapses into an uncharacteristic depression that only combat can cure. His murderous rage at Proctor changes into despair; he accepts Baby's assurances that Proctor will make a stand, but he is already aware of the end:

.....Oh, I grow weak--  
 Cast from my thoughts, and banished from my dream!  
 The plumed hope droops--fate's shadow covers it;  
 And dim forebodings peer into my soul.  
 I am not what I was.....

In order to reinforce this pathos, Mair follows it with a short scene depicting an Indian sun-worshipping ceremony which provides a revealing insight into his sentimental nostalgia for

Indian culture. The scene is static, contributing little to the action of the play, but it does supply a thematic tension. The celebrants invoke the sun, the giver of life, while at the same time they are aware of impending death. In the core of the ceremony, the sun speaks to them through the mouth of a Jokaseed, promising rebirth;

I will restore them to their father's lands;  
I will pour laughter on the earth like rain  
And fill the forest with its ancient mood.

The ceremony concludes with a prayer for divine guidance:

Our warriors retreat--it is thy will!  
Declare the way--the fateful time to stand!  
Then, if in battle they decline in death,  
Take them, Oh Master, to thy Mighty Heart--  
Thy Glorious Ground and Shining Place of Souls!

Compared to Tecumseh's pessimism, the ceremony is ironic for although the warriors are succoured by their expectation of the after-life, their defeat is no less pathetic. Mair offers the ceremony as an accurate documented anthropological observation, based, as he makes clear in his notes, on a contemporary scholarly work, and doubtless he intended it as an example of the spiritual riches of Indian culture. If his version of the ceremony seems suspect today, it is because as presented in the play, the Indians are engaged in a form of worship that is essentially in accord with Mair's own Christian sentiments. The ceremony is included not to show the uniqueness of Indian religion, but its similarity to Christian ideals. In turn, this serves to confirm the righteousness of Anglo-Saxon civilization in North America. So long as the Canadian people can perpetuate Tecumseh's memory and strive to



emulate his people's harmonious relationship with nature, the fundamental relation of man and the divinity will remain unchanged.

The service may provide some degree of solace for the worshippers, but it cannot affect the outcome of the impending battle. On the eve of the battle of Moravian Town, the apprehension of defeat is so strong in Tecumseh's mind that he must actively struggle against it. The field is peaceful, representing in its natural glory the best of Indian life, but its beauty is threatened.

The Spirit of the Woods has decked his home,  
And put his wonders like a garment on,  
To flash, and glow, and dull, and fade, and die!  
Oh, let not manhood fade within my soul!  
And thou, pale doubt [....] hast detracted me....

Tecumseh is a child of nature, and as such, recognizes in the natural cycle of the forest the inevitable fate of his people. His only recourse is to resolve that

Here must my people's cause be lifted up,  
Or sink to rise no more.

As the battle progresses and Proctor flees, Tecumseh is left with only an elemental rage against the race that has destroyed him. This is the moment of his great re-assertion of his original cause. Proctor's behaviour has absolved the Indians of further responsibility to the British, and what is a minor defeat for the Canadian struggle is now a Gotterdammerung for the Indians. As the Americans advance, Tecumseh addresses his warriors:

.....Now must we fight  
Like men; not run like slaves. What matters it

To those who fled, and left us, if they flee!  
 They can join palms, make peace, draw treaties up,  
 And son and father, reconciled again,  
 Will clasp their hands, and glory in their race  
 Which hath despoiled our own. For us, no peace  
 Save what our axes gain, or in our graves.

In his last hour, Tecumseh realizes that the British have been fighting a civil war, and that for the Indians, the time for treaties is past. This realization, far from being a condemnation of the British, serves to ennoble Tecumseh's death. To the romantic mind, death for a cause is a glorious fate, but death in the service of a lost cause verges on apotheosis. In the end, Tecumseh's body is spirited away to a hidden grave by his followers (despite a common tradition which suggests that it was mutilated by American troops), where it will remain in the Arthurian manner as an invisible guardian spirit for his people. Tecumseh's final repudiation of the British cause does not compromise his alliance with Brock and his service to Canada, nor even his respect for the British ideals which in the end have answered him. Rather, he realizes that the wheels of history are turning.

The logic of Tecumseh indicates that Mair was conscious of its failings as a tragedy, for in the final act, there is no textual promise of an eventual British-Canadian victory. This may be ascribed to two factors. Tecumseh has predicted the eventual peace, but he does not refer to it as a British victory. Rather, he speaks of "Son and father reconciled again."

The first factor is historical. Although to Mair's purposes the war of 1812 finished as a British victory, in

actual fact it was inconclusive. The British and Canadians had repulsed the American invasion, and for that reason, the militia legend developed as a hymn to Canadian unity. But the Americans too will claim a victory, for they had righted their grievances about British interference with their maritime commerce, and stabilized the border of the Ohio Territory. It was a legislated peace, made possible by the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, and both sides retired with honour satisfied. There was no moral triumph of Empire over republic, which the melodramatic form of Tecumseh would demand. Rather, there was a preservation of Imperial values. The distinction affects the play in that the final act, which centres around a military defeat, would have to refer to a military victory. The legislated partial-victory, noble as it may be in the development of a Canadian sentiment, could not redress the catastrophe inflicted by Harrison.

But more significantly, victory is not predicted because it would detract from the scale of Tecumseh's defeat. Until Act V, the Indians have been fighting a melodramatic war, and despite their reversal at Tippecanoe--and in part, because of it--they have been winning. In Act V, Mair hurriedly tries to refashion the war as a tragedy, by increasing the significance of defeat, and introducing a note of apprehension on Tecumseh's part. Needless to say, this in itself cannot constitute a tragedy, nor does the idea of heroic last stand against superior odds. But Mair placed this action in what he felt was a suitably tragic sentiment, and refined it with the



with the parallel tragedy of Lefroy. The play ends with Harrison surveying his victory, and thus Tecumseh's defeat is presented as a major set-back in the Canadian cause. But to include the fact that the Canadian defeat is only temporary would diminish the tragedy of Tecumseh. Mair can allow only the one preeminence at the close of the play, and in keeping with his ostensible subject, he awards it to the passing of the Indians. It has already been implied that the Canadians will carry on Tecumseh's ideals by emulating his spiritual nobility and rapport with nature. Even the most pathetic defeat is part of a great design of culture, brought to maturity in the evolution of a Canadian nation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

Dramatic action, regardless of genre, is dialectical in nature, although that dialectic does not always formulate a polemical synthesis. William Archer condemned the poetic drama of his day because it was "lifeless," and what is meant by life but the active progression of character and circumstance? Action is dialectical in that each moment is determined and transformed by the preceeding moment according to the playwright's design.

It has already been claimed that in Tecumseh, probability is causal, that even the most minor incidents hold significance in Mair's scheme. Yet this alone does not suffice to make a play succeed as dramatic literature. Tecumseh is a complex play, but is seriously flawed, in structure and theme, so much so that today it is an object of scholarly interest alone. To fully understand that complexity and its bearing on aesthetic success, we must examine two related conceptual problems: the qualitative contradiction in Mair's understanding of the genres of tragedy and romance; and the thematic contradiction of the play's purpose, which in the final analysis governs its form. Only then is it possible to understand why Tecumseh, much praised in Mair's lifetime, is today almost forgotten, and inappropriate to the modern stage.

Contradiction here is used in the Marxian sense, not as empiric evidence of a play's shortcomings, but as a creative tool of analysis, which when applied to a text will enable one to approach it as something more than a static object of narrative depiction. If a play by its very nature contains the potential of a theatrical realization, it follows that its relation to its audience is active, that the work of art is made sensible in reference to the particular social and psychological environment of its audience. In this sense, a closet drama promises this potential, for while it may be intended overtly for the stage, this does not necessarily preclude production, and even if it were to do so, the very form of the drama invites an imagined production design in the mind of the reader.

Tecumseh, as stated, is a melodrama which aspires to tragedy. This statement however, requires further examination, for the failure to achieve a tragic experience does not mean that a play must then be categorized as a melodrama. It is not Mair's shortcomings as a tragic poet that resulted in a melodramatic Tecumseh, for genres do not exist in derivatory relations. Tecumseh is a melodrama because the structure of its action and the quality of its dramatic conflict are based on a struggle between recognizable forces of virtue and evil which require the audience's consensus in order to become fully sensible within the play. Tragedy is based on a closed ethical system; its conflict, and the resolution contained in the formulation of that conflict, derive dramatic signi-



ficance from its internal scheme. Whereas melodrama rests upon an open concept of conflict and centres upon an ordeal posed by the antagonist, tragedy centres upon action removed from ethics, and the core of the tragic experience is a revelation of why this particular conflict is inevitable. In tragedy, morality itself is not a determinant, but an arena. Aristotle wrote that

...tragedy is an imitation not of men, but of actions, of life, and of felicity...The end of tragedy... does not consist of imitating manners, but it embraces manners on account of actions...Further still, if any one places in a continued series moral speeches, sayings, and sentiments well formed, he will not produce that which is the work of tragedy, but that will be much more of a tragedy which uses these things as subordinate and which contains a fable...1

In this sense, tragedy objectifies ethics, which Aristotle defined as manners: "those things according to which we say that agents are persons of a certain character." The tragic plot places characters of a certain manner or morality into an extreme contradiction, which can only be resolved by the suffering of a protagonist. A character's morality may govern his actions, but we are distanced from it. This is not the case with the melodrama, in which we identify the protagonist because of our sympathy with his manners. In tragedy, morality is causal; in melodrama, it is dogmatic.

By this definition, no part of Tecumseh, can be properly called tragic, even if Lefroy's destiny appears to affirm Aeschylus' dictum that "Man must suffer to be wise".

For even Lefroy, who of all Mair's characters comes closest to a fate shaped by the contradiction between his manners and material actions, is in the end defined by Mair's sense of propriety. We might conclude that Mair was content to accept the pathetic as tragic, yet pathos is an element common to all genres. Lefroy meets a pathetic destiny in that his spirit is destroyed by Iena's death, and Mair attempts to make this tragic by demonstrating that Iena dies out of necessity, that is, that her death is not an accident of war.

Chance is central to the melodramatic plot, but it is not a random coincidence. Chance is aligned; by its very occurrence, it must favour good or evil. In tragedy, chance is causal. It may be attributed to definable actions and events, and what appears to be coincidental is revealed as part of an inevitable design. It is rooted in previous actions, often in specific decisions. It may be chance that Oedipus should arrive in Thebes, and marry Jocasta, but it is not chance that Jocasta should be revealed to be his mother. Coincidence in tragedy is the fulfilment of a previously ordained event, whether that be a prophecy or a moral imperative.

In Act V, as we have seen, Mair attempts to recast Tecumseh's destiny as tragic, by identifying his death with the final defeat of the Indian cause. Yet this identification itself argues against tragedy, for it is arbitrary, historically and textually. Expounding upon Aristotle, Lessing wrote

that the tragic poet

...does not make use of an event because it really happened, but because it happened in such a manner as he will scarcely be able to invent more fitly for his present purpose...What is the first thing that makes a history probable? Is it not its internal probability? 2

The creator of historical drama, regardless of genre, attempts to structure a specific event around selected actions, which will demonstrate the magnitude and significance of the event. In this sense, the dramatist and the historian share a common end; to make sense of historical phenomena. But their reasons for doing so differ greatly, for while the historian is concerned with the event in itself, with an eye to a full comprehension of it, the dramatist creates what Lessing, paraphrasing Aristotle, called "a well-constructed fable wherewith he can combine his intentions".<sup>3</sup> The dramatist isolates an historical event, in the Aristotelean drama at least, by reducing it to individual actions and, using invention as his primary tool, arranging those actions to express his particular vision of the sources and results of that event.<sup>4</sup>

Two considerations may be derived from this which are applicable to Tecumseh. Firstly, Mair's scheme was based on a major, unresolved, contradiction. His intention in writing Tecumseh was to encourage the growth of a national sentiment. To do this, he applied the poet's inventiveness to the historical reality to produce an extra-historical legend which he hoped would reflect the lasting values of



Canadian culture. The history of Tecumseh in this scheme becomes the symbolic re-creation of an Hegelian dialectic of culture; the material world changes, but an Ideal grows, is transformed, and begets a new world. This is a romantic view of history, which reinforces a social perspective on the present. The melodramatic structure is a device in which conflicting ideals are measured and rewarded, and by which the audience's sympathy with the victorious ideal is ratified.

But Mair also had another purpose in mind. He felt that the history of Tecumseh had to be retold, and made popular with his generation, not only because it was a romantic saga and thus central to Canada's national evolution, but because it was the duty of all the citizens of the Empire to be acquainted with its history. It will be recalled that Brock exhorts his troops to fight for Canada and the unity of the Empire. In the preface to the play, Mair wrote,

If the prophetic soul of a wide empire,  
"dreaming on things to come" is already  
prefiguring an Imperial adjustment in which  
the larger, if not the greater, Britain shall  
be the outworks, and the mother-country the  
citadel, it is surely important that she  
should know something of the history and idiosyncracies of her offspring.

He also stated that the "colouring" of the play "is due to a lifetime's observation of those primitive inter-racial and formative influences which, together with a time-honoured polity, are the sources of the Canadian tradition." The 1901 edition of Tecumseh contains twenty pages of notes,

supplying detailed references to characters, incidents, and natural allusions in the text. These notes attest to Mair's concern for realism, not in style, but in content. But excepting those which illuminate obscure references in the text, the notes are not necessary to an understanding of the action of the play. They do, however, lend an air of credence to the events in the play, suggesting that what we read is as historically accurate as it is fancifully poetic.

To some extent, this does not prove a problem in Tecumseh; as we have seen with Harrison, Mair was generally able to create a romantic character and still satisfy his interpretation of the actual history. As a naive historian, whose perspective was biased by his romantic nationalism, Mair doubtless believed that his idealized characters were historically realistic. The problem, and the contradiction which in the end destroys the unity of the play, occurs when Tecumseh makes his stand at Moravian Town.

Tecumseh tells his warriors prior to the attack on Detroit that this is the turning point in their dream, and so it is, until Brock dies, for the fall of Detroit signals the success of the British-Indian alliance. As we have seen, Mair attempts to make Proctor responsible for the death of the Indian cause, because of his hatred for the Indians and his military incompetence. On the eve of the final battle, Tecumseh is apprehensive of final defeat; only he and Iena recognize that this will be more than a routine battle. Yet there is no reason, in the strategic position of both the

Indians and the British, why this should not be just one of a series of upcoming engagements, and there is no reason given as to why this particular defeat, one of many in the war, should be catastrophic. Tecumseh's death is a chance occurrence, a risk assumed in every battle, and it has not been fore-ordained. Despite Mair's efforts, the Battle of Moravian Town remains a catastrophe in retrospect only, and only then because it was there that Tecumseh fell.

Historical accuracy demanded that Mair have Tecumseh die at Moravian Town and Mair's theme demanded that this death be the passing of an era. But the internal probability of Tecumseh makes no such demand. Tecumseh's death is the fulfilment of a romantic vision, inherent in the very idea of the melodrama. But structurally, there is nothing to make that end necessary: it is not developed by causal action. Indeed, the logic of the play would require that Tecumseh meet a far more triumphant end. As a character in a fable, Tecumseh does not deserve to die, at least not by the actions of one so mean as Proctor. And in fact, Mair's handling of his death-blow is awkward. A stage direction inform us that

Tecumseh and his warriors, by a fierce onslaught, again drive their opponents back. The fight continues without--then re-enter Tecumseh mortally wounded.

Not only is the wound--fatal to Tecumseh and the whole Indian nation--inflicted offstage, there is a momentary lapse in the action while it occurs. Tecumseh is wounded in a minor skirmish; he is not, like General Custer, the last of a handful defying a besieging force. To show this death wound on



stage, Mair would have to emphasize its accidental nature, which would only demean a hero's death. There is a conflicting interest here between the legend and the history, and Mair resolved it by putting it literally out of sight.

But even given the necessary fact of Tecumseh's death, the identification of Tecumseh with the last hope of the Indian cause has only been stated, never proved, in the text. Tecumseh is a forest monarch, whose rule reflects the same principles of justice and order as the British crown embodies. But Tecumseh, as an atypical paragon, can leave no provision for a successor as one might expect.

There is no successor implied in the play because Mair had to make clear that this was the final stand of the Indian nations. But in fact, this was far from the truth, as events in Mair's own day, in the American plains and the Canadian West attest. Mair was commissioned into the militia during the second Riel Rebellion, and repeated the jingoistic anti-Metis platitudes of Orange Ontario with fervour. Tecumseh was not the last great Indian leader, but he was the last to ally his cause with the British rule in Canada and therein lay a crucial distinction. Tecumseh ends with the loom of a new Canada, in which Indian militancy could only be disruptive. Thus, the play affirms an historical prejudice, but at the cost of historical accuracy, and ultimately dramatic credibility. This is not just the consequence of Mair's inexperience with the drama, but of his conceptual prejudices. To his mind, the Canadian people were Tecumseh's successors,

and no rival claimants could be seriously considered. And even Tecumseh was an arbitrary choice, for he was useful to Mair only because his history coincided with the War of 1812. If Tecumseh had not allied his cause with the British, if the Indians had met their end at Tippecanoe, Mair would likely have had little interest in the subject.

Mair's interest in the historical account of Tecumseh was doubtlessly sincere, but it was subordinate to his more pressing interest in developing a national literature. He believed--as many do today--that a nation's literature is "the decisive test of its intellectual faculties," and that a Canadian literature should be "liberal in its range, but in its highest forms, springing in large measure from the soil and 'tasting of the wood'."<sup>5</sup>

With Tecumseh, Mair did succeed in popularizing a legend, although the credit for the persistence of the militia legend is by no means his alone. But even during his lifetime, he had cause for resentment. In 1891, he wrote to Denison.

As regards Canadian Literature, I have given more time and labor to it than it deserves...I am done with the "Canadian Public" which consists of mere cattle...It's true and only enjoyments (the heights of Canadian ambition, in fact) are guzzling and drinking and rotten politics. 6

Mair was bitter because of the mediocre success of Tecumseh, which, although published in three editions before his death, was never distributed in England and included in the curricula of Ontario schools, as he had hoped it would be.<sup>7</sup> But we might assume a deeper source of resentment as

well. The national sentiment Mair had tried to encourage was increasingly undermined by a new materialism in his lifetime, which generated new tasks, and new forms, for literature, and by the emergence of a new kind of nationalism which left Tecumseh a relic in its own day. Although Imperialist sentiment was to linger on and remain influential for some time after his death in 1929, Mair's brand of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in Canada was challenged by a recognition that Canada comprised not one but two founding cultures, a fact that began to assert itself forcefully in Dominion politics. In Tecumseh, Mair eulogized a tradition that could only appeal to a minority elite, and while the minority would continue to hold disproportionate influence in Canada for decades to come, it gradually came to prefer less overt reminders of its sources.

And yet, even though Tecumseh and its contemporaries have fallen into relative obscurity, the artistic tradition they represent continues. The definition of Canadian culture has always been a prevalent concern in Canadian literature and drama, and the historical drama which attempts to define a national sentiment, be it Victorian romanticism or post-war populism, has long been established as a major tradition in the Canadian theatre. Mair was one of the first in a long series of Canadian playwrights to favour the melodrama as a vehicle to create a revisionist nationalism, and in the end, this is perhaps the value of Tecumseh: it reminds the scholar and critic that the present concern for a Canadian



drama is based on problems and prejudices similar to those encountered in a familiar manner a century ago. For in Canada the same ideological fashions occur with fascinating regularity.

## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama (New York: Atheneum Press, 1970), p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>In his essay "The Sociology of the Modern Drama," (reprinted in Eric Bentley's The Theory of the Modern Stage (London: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 425-450), Georg Lukacs has argued that the bourgeois revolution of the Enlightenment affected man's perception of his relation to the material world, and hence his abstract concepts of literary character. He concluded that:

When ethics cease to be a given, the ethical knotting within the drama--thus, its aesthetics--had to be created; whereupon ethics, as the cornerstone of the artistic composition, move necessarily into the centre of motivation. In this way, the great and spontaneous unity of ethics and aesthetics, within the tragic experience, commences to be a problem. (p. 450).

<sup>4</sup>It may be argued that those values, abstract though they be, are determined by the material structure of society. If so, then the identification of melodramatic action with the moral priorities of a society can only be relative to that society. Hence, melodrama while it posits action in absolutist terms, is a relativist genre.

<sup>5</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination, p. 201.

<sup>7</sup>Eric Bentley, The Life of the Drama, p. 202.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Booth, English Melodrama (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965) pp. 13-14.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination, p. 205.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Booth, English Melodrama, pp. 13-14.

<sup>13</sup>A simplified example may be found in the development of the messenger of classical drama into the complex electronic data system of modern life.

The messenger gave way to the delivered letter, a common device on the Renaissance stage, which allowed for the possibilities of misreading, or as in Hamlet, tampering, to alter the course of the action. With the invention of the modern postal service, the possibilities expanded; now letters could be lost in the mails, or delivered to the wrong address, with disastrous results. Plots have been based on delayed letters arriving with disastrous news years too late. The letter gave way to the telephone, which not only provided a novel device on the stage, but affected the very structure of drama, as Cocteau's monologue demonstrates. The telephone introduced a new type of thriller to the stage, of the Sorry, Wrong Number variety.

The last quarter-century has seen a revolution in the communications industry which has affected the very way we perceive the world, if Marshall McLuhan is to be believed. Thus, the telephone has given way to instantaneous computerized transmission, to the point where the idea of communications devices with sentient awareness no longer seems novel. This has affected the drama by introducing a new type of character which, although characterized as an anthropomorphic villain of the type anticipated by Capek in R.U.R., has the capacity to extend beyond recognizable character archetypes.

<sup>14</sup>Peter Brooks, The Melodramatic Imagination, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup>Melodrama is also determined by class interests. A militant union melodrama would be indecorous to a bourgeois audience. But there is no difference in the audience response, to a union drama on the one hand, and a sophisticated upper-class mystery on the other, providing that the necessary consensus exists within the respective audience.

<sup>16</sup>Eric Bentley, "The Broadway Intelligentsia" in his In Search of Theatre (New York: Vintage Books, 1954), pp. 3-23.

<sup>17</sup>David Grimstead, Melodrama Unveiled: American Theatre and Culture 1800-1850 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1968.), p. 24.

<sup>18</sup>William Wilfred Campbell, "Life and Letters", Ottawa Evening Journal (Sat. July 9, 1904).



<sup>19</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, "Life and Letters", Ottawa Evening Journal (Sat. February 6, 1904).

<sup>20</sup>Carl Berger, The Sense of Power (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 218.

<sup>21</sup>Winston Churchill, "The Anglo-Saxon Tradition" (Address to the Canadian Club at Toronto, November 8, 1915)

<sup>22</sup>William Wilfred Campbell, "Life and Letters", Ottawa Evening Journal (Sat. September 7, 1904).

<sup>23</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, "Shakespeare and the Latter-Day Drama", Canadian Magazine, 30, 14 (November, 1907)

<sup>24</sup>Ferdinand Brunetiere, "The Law of the Drama" in Barret Clark's European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965), pp. 384-5.

<sup>25</sup>David Grimstead, Melodrama Unveiled: American Theatre and Culture, 1800-1850, p. 227.

## CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that Kipling's achievement was in large part due to the fact that he integrated a popular Imperialist sentiment with a realistic depiction of the trials of the Empire. His use of vernacular ballad forms explains in large measure his success in uniting sentiment and object.

<sup>2</sup>Anonymous, Dominion Illustrated, no. 102 (June 14, 1890), p. 379.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Mair, "The New Canada" in Carl Ballstadt's The Search for English-Canadian Literature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 151.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas D'Arcy McGee, "The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion" in Charles Murphy's 1825- D'Arcy McGee-1925 (Toronto Macmillan, 1937), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Goldwin Smith, "What is the matter with Canadian Literature?" in The Search for English-Canadian Literature, pp. 87-88.

<sup>6</sup>Matthew Arnold, "Culture and Anarchy" in Matthew Arnold Selected Prose (London: New Penquin Library, 1970), p. 213.

<sup>7</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, "Preface to the First Edition of Poems (1853)" in Matthew Arnold: Selected Prose, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup>Anonymous, "Mr. Goldwin Smith and Canadian Literature" in The Search for English-Canadian Literature, p. 88.

<sup>9</sup>Carl Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 108.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, For a full discussion of this subject see Berger, Chapter Three, "The Loyalist Tradition."

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p. 100.

<sup>13</sup>John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto: Univeristy of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 366.

<sup>14</sup>C.P. Stacey, "The War of 1812 in Canadian History" in Morris Zaslow's The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1964), p. 331.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 334.

<sup>16</sup>Myth here is not used in the archetypal or anthropological sense, but in the narrowest sense as applied to national culture, similar to what Porter called a charter myth. In this sense, the story of George Washington has developed beyond the role of a fanciful historical legend into a mythic symbol of the principles of American republicanism. In Mair's scheme, the militia legend became more than an heroic account of past glory: it became the foundations of the present. The contradiction, of course, is that while myths may indeed be written, they cannot be arbitrarily invented. Thus, any attempt to compose a myth must fail by definition.

<sup>17</sup>Anonymous, "Literary Notes" Montreal Gazette (March 2, 1886).

<sup>18</sup>Archibald MacMurchy, Handbook of Canadian Literature (Toronto: William Briggs, Co. 1906), p. 109.

<sup>19</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 188.

<sup>20</sup>It is worth noting that in our modern vocabulary, "sensibility" has the currency value that "sentiment" had for the Victorians.

<sup>21</sup>Michael Tait, "Playwrights In a Vacuum", in William New's "Dramatists in Canada" (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972), pp. 13-26.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Tait does not suggest that this condition was unique to Canada. The nineteenth century saw a decline in the drama not only in Canada but in the United States and Europe as well. However, the Canadian situation was complicated by the lack of a strong actor-manager entrepreneurial tradition; those who worked in Canada had to compete with the powerful interests of the American circuits, and thus generally produced a mixed repertoire of classics and potboilers, some of which were indeed Canadian. For the serious dramatists who wished to write and see produced poetic tragedies, there was little opportunity for stage exposure--not because of indifference, but economics.



<sup>23</sup>See B.K. Sandwell, "Our Adjunct Theatre (Address to the Canadian Club at Montreal, December 8, 1913) and "The Annexation of Our Stage" (Canadian Magazine, 38, November, 1911), and Fred Jacob, "Waiting for a Dramatist" (Canadian Magazine, 43, October, 1914).

<sup>24</sup>Michael Tait, "Playwrights in a Vacuum", p. 13.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas D'Arcy McGee, "The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion", p. 13.

<sup>26</sup>William Archer, "The Poetic Drama" The Critic, 36, pp. 23-7 (January 1900).

<sup>27</sup>John Todhunter, "Blank Verse on the Stage", The Fortnightly Review, 71, n.s. (January-June, 1902), pp. 346.

<sup>28</sup>\_\_\_\_\_, "Poetic Drama and its Prospects on the Stage", The Fortnightly Review, 71, n.s. (January-June 1902) p. 714.

<sup>29</sup>Interview with Charles Mair in Tecumseh; A Drama and Canadian Poems; Dreamland and Other Poems (Toronto: Radisson Society, 1926) p. IV.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup>Charles Mair, Preface to Tecumseh, A Drama, (Toronto: William Briggs Co. 1901).

<sup>2</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Mair, Preface to Tecumseh, a Drama (Toronto: William Briggs Co. 1901) p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>John Matthews, "Charles Mair" in Robert McDougall's Canada's Past and Present: A Dialogue (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1965) p. 99.

<sup>5</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair Literary Nationalist, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 162.

<sup>7</sup>Mair's use of chance in his attempt to create tragedy is further discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>8</sup>It may be that Mair is making a veiled comment on the American Civil war here, for like many of his compatriots, he favoured the Confederate cause. His friend Denison had even received Jefferson Davis at his home in Toronto, and had provided some slight material support for the South. Berger has observed that "the Lost Cause of the Confederacy and the United Empire Loyalists tradition both centered upon defeat at the hands of the "materialistic North" (The Sense of Power, p. 17).

<sup>9</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist, p. 185.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Neither were grievances only felt by American immigrants--who, far from being the unwelcome encroachers Brock describes, were actively recruited by the British government. Only a decade after the war, the Scottish agitator Robert Gurlay, known as "the Gadfly", would be expelled from Upper Canada for his persistent attacks on repressive land policy. And in 1837, William Lyon Mackenzie's abortive rebellion would derive its support for similar reasons.

Upper Canada, even prior to the outbreak of war in 1812, was governed by what amounted to martial law, and its citizens did not enjoy the constitutional freedoms so admired by Mair until the introduction of responsible government in the 1840s.

<sup>12</sup>C.P. Stacey, "The War of 1812 in Canadian History", p. 334.

<sup>13</sup>It may be argued that in the poetic drama, the quality of "life" is also a function of language. In the sense that poetic language has a literary action of its own, this is undeniable, and certainly part of the reason that Mair's characters remain unconvincing is that their language, although highly formal, is unremarkable. Yet, even if Mair's poetic diction were excellent, the play would not achieve excellence, for in the end, no matter how ornate or forceful, diction must express dramatic action. As a general rule, Mair attempts to "disguise" confused action with overly ornate language, depending primarily on a pseudo-archaic vocabulary and imitative Shakespearean sentence structures. As a consequence, the rhythm of the spoken language becomes obstructive to the flow of the action, and the weakness of the action serves only to emphasize the incongruity of the diction. Mair was generally incapable of achieving the unity of diction and action except in those instances where he appears to be fully confident of his thought, such as Brock's credo of Empire, and Lefroy's descriptions of the prairies. He was not alone in his naive belief that good poetry produced good drama; better poets than he were undone by that same mistake.

<sup>14</sup>Ernest A Cruikshank, "The Battle of Queenston Heights" in Morris Zaslow's The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1964), p. 36.

<sup>15</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist, p. 178.

<sup>16</sup>Perhaps the most chilling version of this theme in modern times can be found in the Nazi playwright Hans Johst's Schlageter (1934), in which a young Freikorps Stormtrooper tells his monarchist father, "The individual is a corpuscle in the blood stream of his people."

<sup>17</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist, p. 172.



#### CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, The Poetic, in Barret Clark's European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965) p. 9

<sup>2</sup>Gotthold Lessing, Hamburg Dramaturgy (New York: Dover Publishers, 1962), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>This Aristotelean convention, which provides a theoretical allowance for the poet's invention to go beyond historical fact, has of course, been challenged in the modern drama. Both Shaw and Brecht, to name only the two most notable of the challengers, have used the drama to express not the romantic concept of a "poetic truth," but an idea of historical objectivity. Brecht evolved his theories of the epic theatre in order to bring the scientific techniques of Marxism to dramatic invention, although in the end, one's acceptance of his historical judgment depends on one's faith in Marxian analysis as an objective tool.

The example of Shaw is somewhat more complex, for he did not depart from the Aristotelean drama as such. Shaw excused historical invention and the distortions of the Aristotelean drama in Saint Joan by laying claim to a rational insight. To quote from his Preface to Saint Joan,

All I claim is that by this inevitable sacrifice of verisimilitude I have secured in the only possible way sufficient veracity to justify me in claiming that as far as I can gather from the available documentation, and from such powers of divination as I possess, the things I represent these three exponents of the drama as saying are the things they actually would have said if they had known what they were really doing. And beyond this neither drama nor history can go in my hands.

Nevertheless, while Shaw and Brecht may both claim a superior insight into the workings of history, their plays remain as masterful examples of Aristotle's "internal probability."

<sup>5</sup>Charles Mair, Preface to Tecumseh, A Drama, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Carl Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 77

<sup>7</sup>Norman Shrive, Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist, p. 192.

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